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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF MONOPOLY AND
PLURALISM IN TELEVISION BROADCASTING -
A SOUTH AFRICAN MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

A thesis presented to the
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for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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July 1984

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To Val

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ABSTRACT

Since the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry in 1969 to consider the desirability or otherwise of introducing a television service in South Africa and the subsequent establishment of television in the Republic in 1976, no official policy statement has been announced on possible future television developments.

This study's main contribution to knowledge is in attempting to provide a framework for such development, based on an evaluation of relevant television system experience. In addition, this dissertation attempts to measure public attitudes to television's performance, organisation and regulation after eight years of operation. To date, no published research exists on these aspects of television broadcasting in South Africa.

In this dissertation, an historic and contemporary analysis of selected television systems, a social and economic justification for moving South Africa from its present monopoly broadcasting structure is presented.

A synthesis of television experience with particular

reference to Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States is evolved, suggesting how this transition to a plural system, permitting independent television broadcasting, might be achieved.

The resulting proposal recommends that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) should remain the principal instrument of national broadcasting, but entry should be granted to a regional television service based on the major metropolitan centres. This independent service should have the capacity for national broadcasting of programmes through network arrangements.

The alternative service would be formed by a partnership of state and private sector interests with the Afrikaans and English press groups having a significant role in the latter. The system calls for the utilisation of a domestic communications satellite for efficient distribution of both SABC and independent television channels.

The late arrival of television in South Africa was due, in part, to serious misgivings and open hostility to what was seen by some politicians and community leaders as overseas excesses with the medium. Strong fears existed, causing television to be denounced as a subversive force and an insidious influence posing a particular

form a major prerequisite in conforming with regulatory specifications.

The conventional social and economic criticisms levelled at advertising are re-examined and it is concluded that the costs in consumer welfare terms are not excessive. South Africa's existing advertising regulatory instruments are thought to be sound and capable of adapting to media change.

The role of the South African press in future television developments is seen as fundamental. Without the option of diversification into the electronic media, it is concluded that the press cannot ultimately survive in its present form.

South Africa is considered to be well placed to benefit from the experience of other countries with television development. Chapter 10 is an attempt at synthesis of those aspects that appear realistic, bearing in mind the nation's limited resources and other social and economic priorities.

The resulting model is offered as a possible framework and is not meant to imply a definitive solution.

The model rests on the overriding assumption that

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government, the SABC, the press groups and other private sector interests will be able to put aside past antagonisms in the public interest.

threat to Afrikaner cultural values. This largely emotional response, combined with other factors and attitudes related to South Africa's complex demographic, socio-economic and political make-up, has shaped the fledgling television service and imposed severe operational constraints. The central hypothesis explored is that : "monopoly in television broadcasting is both socially and economically detrimental in the South African context".

The author visited media institutions and universities in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Television developments in other countries considered relevant were reviewed through an extensive literature search.

South African fieldwork comprised a three-part empirical investigation into White attitudes to television after six years of exposure to the medium. Phases 1 and 2 were carried out in 1982, and Phase 3 in 1983.

Phase 1 was a pilot study consisting of depth interviews with a convenience sample of 97 opinion leaders from the Cape Town area.

Phase 2 took the form of a public opinion survey of 279 White ABC viewers from the Cape Town area using a stratified area random sample, employing personal interviews by means of a structured questionnaire.

Phase 3 examined video penetration and domestic viewing patterns, utilising the same methodology as in Phase 2, but with an increased sample of 321 respondents from the same population. Data analysis for Phases 2 and 3 was facilitated by use of appropriate statistical packages, using the chi-square test for examining the relationship between variables.

These empirical investigations indicated dissatisfaction with programme quality and choice, with the vast majority of both English and Afrikaans speaking respondents in favour of independent broadcasting being permitted in South Africa, subject to suitable state regulation. The social implications of increased programme output and the concomitant increase in advertising are considered, with particular emphasis on research findings on televised violence and the effects of television on youth.

The medium's educational and public information roles are examined with reference to possible new initiatives for South Africa.

Regionalism in television broadcasting, as advocated in this dissertation, is seen to be in line with government development priorities for devolution of power to South Africa's eight development regions. The study shows that regionalism and indeed localism are now essential components in world television systems and

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1976, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). television service became operational.

To the non-South African observer, the late arrival of the now seemingly indispensable medium of television would seem extraordinary, particularly when considered alongside the country's impressive economic and technological achievements as seen across the whole range of usual criteria for measuring national progress.

It is necessary to take into account the more complex political and cultural attitudes, unique to South Africa, that have contributed to the late arrival of the medium, its centralised organisational structure and its relationship to the Nationalist government. These same attitudes are of such significance that they will inevitably determine television's future in South Africa, acting either as an inhibitor or as a stimulus to development.

During the mid-1950's, the Nationalist government flatly declared that broadcast television for South Africa was not even to be considered. Orlik³ summed up the government's arguments at the time as :

- (1) that reliance on American and British-produced features would be unavoidable and highly detrimental to the recently achieved broadcast equality of

the English and Afrikaans languages;

- (2) that the potential political impact of television was unknown; and
- (3) that the psychological impact of the medium on the urbanised Bantu might be dangerous in a country where "Caucasians alone possess the vote but constitute only one-fifth of the population"⁴.

Orlik further illustrates Nationalist reluctance when he states :

" . . . Propheying cultural suicide, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Albert Hertzog, had long denounced 'that evil black box'. In 1960 Prime Minister Verwoerd added his voice, but he stressed economics - the high cost of television and the number of competing systems still under development. Commercial interests, both within and without South Africa, offered financial inducements to the government throughout the 1960's, but the Nationalists stood firm behind the negativism of Hertzog. The political friends of television had no better luck in 1966 when the largely English stock United Party suffered a disastrous defeat, taking with it the slogan 'Want TV? Vote U.P.' . . . "⁵.

The American entertainment industry's newspaper Variety of January 6, 1965 had this to say on South African government policy regarding television :

"The government, dominated by Afrikaner White Nationalists, sees television as a 'subversive' force, 'an insidious influence that destroyed mighty empires' and one which threatens the destruction of white rule in South Africa. Television films, showing mingling of the races, government officials have declared, would lead to crime, rape and political holocaust"⁶.

Fears on the part of Afrikaner leaders concerning the dilution of the hard-earned broadcast language parity, and the implications that the new found Afrikaner identity might be undermined, must have appeared justified considering the negligent treatment the Afrikaans radio programmes had received compared to that of the English service, since the establishment of the SABC broadcasting monopoly in 1936.

The antagonism between Afrikaans and English speaking South Africans has been a major constraint on the development of broadcasting in the country and appears to have been, together with other factors mainly political in nature, largely responsible for what many consider to be television's failure to meet performance expectations to date, as a provider of information, entertainment and education.

The Nationalist Party's victory in the 1948 election gave impetus to the task of improving the Afrikaans radio service. It also resulted in Afrikaner control of the SABC's board of governors. Nationalist political dominance since 1948 has meant, according to many South African media commentators, that the state controlled broadcasting monopoly of the SABC has largely pursued Afrikaner, and to some extent Nationalist party ideology. Accusations of spreading government propaganda, political bias, news slanting, etc. abound. Opposition politicians are quick to exploit any opportunity to emphasise what they see as the 'inseparable' nature of the union between the SABC and the government.

The question of the degree of autonomy desirable for broadcasting monopolies is examined later in this dissertation, as it is fundamental to the concept of public service broadcasting. Certainly the South African example differs markedly in interpretation, at least in practice, from other western democracies and in some respects appears to resemble the more autocratic practices of the USSR and eastern Europe.

1.2 PLURALISM AND REGIONALISM

In spite of the fact that the SABC has many critics inside and outside South Africa, its achievements in radio broadcasting have been considerable by any standards.

In the face of disparate and complex factors of race, culture and language, not to mention geographical and technological problems, it has provided a radio broadcasting service national, regional and cultural in nature that has no equal in Africa and in many respects, compares with the best in the world.

It is important at the outset to emphasise that this study, although focussing on much of the criticism levelled at broadcasting in South Africa, should not be interpreted solely as a critical evaluation of the SABC per se; it should, rather, be seen as an evaluation of a proposal for a pluralistic broadcasting framework permitting the entry of an independent television service with regional broadcasting capability, financed by advertising and managed and operated by the private sector. The new service would be responsible to a minister and ultimately to Parliament through a new Act. The SABC would remain the principle instrument of national broadcasting.

An equally important objective of this dissertation is to attempt to present a case for greater autonomy for the state broadcasting service, thus enabling South Africans to benefit from a truly pluralistic system of television broadcasting.

There can be little doubt that the South African viewing

public, having sampled eight years of television, will demand more quality and quantity on their screens and will wish to exercise their right to programme choice through the provision of more channels. Viewers will become increasingly dissatisfied with a single centralised national service and will look to broadcasters to provide alternatives, especially in terms of regional programming. Because of the ethnic nature of the TV2 and TV3 services, which began operation in 1982, they cannot be considered in the strict sense, as programme alternatives for most Afrikaans and English language viewers.

It seems logical, therefore, in exploring new viewing alternatives, to turn to the private sector as a means of filling the gap, at no, or at least low, cost to the taxpayer.

A major part of this study is the examination of evidence that an alternative television service could be provided by private enterprise, serving the regions from major metropolitan centres and thus the bulk of the urban population of South Africa. The study endeavours to show that there is more than sufficient advertising revenue in the South African economy to finance the service. South Africa still lags behind other industrialised countries in advertising expenditure, spending 0,68% of GNP in 1980 on advertising, compared

with, for example, Brazil's 1 percent, the United Kingdom's 1,25 percent, and the United States with over 2 percent⁷.

Mr Pik Botha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information, speaking in the House of Assembly on his budget vote on September 19, 1981, said television could not meet the large demand for advertising. He also expressed concern for the future of newspapers, not only because advertisers were turning to television in increasing numbers, but also because "sophisticated technological communications media would slowly overtake newspapers in more and more fields"⁸.

The concern of the press regarding the growth of the electronic media, in particular, is another argument presented later in this dissertation for allowing the press to diversify into private sector television, subject to suitable controls.

It is also argued that the need for regional Afrikaans/English language television, based on the major metropolitan centres but with national networking capability, would be an unfair burden on the existing SABC structure committed, as it is, to the three services of TV1, TV2 and TV3. (TV2 and TV3 are ethnic channels serving the Black communities.)

Even if it was thought desirable to develop regional

structures, a concession to smaller businesses that is used overseas and collectively acts as a spur to economic activity.

Independent, regional television has much to offer all segments of the South African economy, consumers, marketers and the television industry infrastructure in the creation of new employment opportunities and fresh communication challenges.

1.3 OUTLINE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF ADVERTISING

The social costs of television advertising are examined in detail, along with moral and ethical considerations and their special significance in the South African context. Control mechanisms in use in Britain, the United States and Australia are discussed and compared with South African practice. Indeed, the social implications of advertising forming the foundation of an independent television system in South Africa, even with the most rigorous legislative and voluntary industry control mechanisms, is of such profound social magnitude that a considerable part of the study is given over to the examination of the sociological case for and against advertising and television in society, regardless of advertising involvement.

The cultural criticism that mass communication media supported by advertising satiate the public with the most superficial information and entertainment, encouraging what is popular rather than spiritual in values is examined. Television is particularly prone to this criticism and according to Wright et al.

"even the most ardent advocate of advertising has to strain to make a case for the cultural contributions of many situation comedies and programmes that dramatize murder and mayhem"⁹.

Social arguments concerning advertising tend to take place between the advertising industry, represented by the advertising agencies and their clients the advertisers on the one hand and a variety of what can best be regarded as pressure groups in society usually political 'consumerist', 'environmentalist' or religious, on the other.

Many academics also feel the need to make a stand against what appears to them to be the insidious attack on society by advertising. Although it is only comparatively recently that the social sciences have considered advertising sufficiently important to merit study at the highest levels, an impressive amount of work has been done, particularly in the US and Britain, much of

it relevant to this dissertation and the possible effects of advertising on South African society.

The examination of the social aspects of advertising is centred around four main areas. The first is, quite simply, what advertising can claim to do for people, by calling their attention to products and services, explaining them and providing information about them. Criticism comes when advertising goes beyond this basic informational role and the question of justification for persuasive content needs to be considered.

The other social areas considered are criticisms concerning the 'manipulation' argument : that advertising makes people buy things they don't really want and can't afford; that by creating new needs they (the advertisements) drive people to seek increasing quantities of even more trivial material objects; that by misrepresentation and suppression of facts they lead people to irrational purchasing decisions. White and Lannon¹⁰ also attempt to tackle the arguments that advertising leads to trivialisation and debasement of language and imagery; that advertisements are visual and aural pollution; that they are an irritating intrusion into people's privacy. They also consider the criticisms that advertising degrades women by talking down to them, portraying them in an unfavourable light, reinforcing

undesirable stereotypes and that advertising aimed at children produces a whole range of undesirable effects.

South African television advertising content is strictly controlled by the SABC's interpretation of the Broadcasting Act, together with the industry's own voluntary mechanism the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). These and other control devices are evaluated when discussing the social aspects of advertising.

In considering a proposal advocating more television exposure for South Africans, it is also appropriate to discuss some of the major research findings pertaining to broadcasting and society.

For similar reasons, advertising's controversial image with economists is examined. From Borden to Baumol, Galbraith to Schumpeter, with particularly significant contributions from Barnet, Black and Steiner on the economics of broadcasting and advertising and also monopoly and competition in television.

Other major contributors to advertising's controversial place in the economy and whose work is relevant to this dissertation are Alderson, Dorfman, Doyle, Kaldor, Kuehn, Lambin, Palda, Silverman and Telser.

The Brookings Institution's comprehensive analysis of the US broadcasting industry and its interaction with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is of great importance to this dissertation as, in essence, the objectives of the analysis were to examine the industry's potential for improved performance, especially in the number, variety and quality of programmes offered, and to evaluate FCC regulation in light of its efforts to promote local programming.

The Brookings Institute study was concerned with the economic, technical and institutional factors that determine the industry's performance and the kinds of programmes available to viewers, and the value of television to viewers and society. It examines the costs, potential benefits and regulatory policy issues arising from several innovations such as pay-TV, cable television, video-cassettes and direct satellite-to-home broadcasts.

The analysis leads to the conclusion that the American FCC has made network stations enormously profitable by shielding them from competition and that its stated goal of increased local programming has largely failed. The report accuses the FCC of restraining the development of the US television industry, at a cost of several billion dollars in viewer satisfaction, for a purpose that has yielded little benefit. South African students

of broadcasting economics will be interested in the study's conclusion which urges the FCC and Congress to redefine broadcast policy to encourage competition by lifting restraints on cable, pay-TV, and other promising means of increasing the number of viewer options¹¹.

Any research into broadcasting constantly emphasises the fact that radio and television systems, in every country, have evolved to meet a particular set of needs that are peculiar to the country concerned. Objectives, problems, political philosophy, complexities of language and culture, levels of economic wealth and development, all contribute to the final result. This fact is worth stressing, as during the course of investigations a number of what appear to be highly commendable 'ready-made' broadcasting systems, judged in terms of public service, levels of professionalism, etc. are to be found. The temptation, then, is to attempt to superimpose one of these 'proven' systems on the South African situation. This approach, of course, would be highly suspect, as it pays scant regard to the abovementioned socioeconomic and cultural problems, all of which are of the greatest relevance in South Africa.

However, South Africa is in a unique position for an industrial country, when specifically considering

television development, in that it can benefit from many years of experience gathered by other, particularly western, countries.

Television first started as a public service in a very small way in Britain in 1936, but the real growth explosion came in the post World War II years with American and western Europe realising the enormous potential of the medium and having the established technology and the experience gained with radio networks to ensure the new service would be economically viable. A great deal of the experience, good and bad, gained over the past 30 years, is examined in this study.

Closely related to this, is the study of informed South African opinion leaders on the subject of television. Valuable contributions have come from not only broadcasters but academics, politicians, sociologists, economists, religious leaders, businessmen, community leaders and others. In many cases, these opinion leaders are alarmed by and critical of what they judge to be the failures of the medium in overseas countries and they are concerned that only the best experience in public service broadcasting should be incorporated in future South African television developments.

They are, in the main, aware of the medium's potential

benefits in the South African context, particularly with regard to education, information and entertainment. Many opinion leaders are critical of broadcasting's monopoly structure and support private sector involvement, especially as far as television is concerned. The autonomy of the SABC is, in many instances, seriously questioned, as is the centralised nature of the existing television service, i.e. its lack of regional flavour. These and other issues are examined in an attempt to formulate a proposal for an independent television network, adapted to suit the individual and complex needs of South Africa.

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CHAPTER 2DEMOCRACY AND RESPONSIBLE BROADCASTING2.1 FUNDAMENTALS OF BROADCASTING SYSTEMS

Regulation in broadcasting seems inevitable. Most media commentators agree that no country can afford to leave so powerful and persuasive a means of communication unregulated. Governments have to administer the use of radio and television frequencies in the national interest. It is the interpretation of this obligation that accounts for the diversity of broadcasting systems.

According to Professor Head¹, a respected authority on world broadcasting systems, the differences revolve around three key questions that every national broadcasting system has to answer for itself :

1. ". . . How shall broadcasting be managed? Directly by the state?
Indirectly by the state through a semi-autonomous chartered organisation?
By private operators subject to some degree of state regulation? Or by some combination of these? . . ."²

2. ". . . How shall broadcasting be financed? By state subsidy? By licence fees on receiving sets? By revenue from broadcast advertising? Or by some combination of these? . . . "3
3. "By what criteria shall programmes be controlled? By the desires of the generality of set owners, as determined by audience research? By judgements made by political leaders? By professional broadcasters? By committees representing major social institutions such as education, religion, and the arts? By regional interests as reflected in political subdivisions? By national subgroups with special ethnic, linguistic, or cultural identities? or by some combination of these? . . . "4

Head further states that :

". . . each of these alternatives has been adopted in practice in one country or another. Often local circumstances dictate the choice. For example, the economies of many countries could not finance a full-scale broadcasting service solely from advertising revenue, even if that was the desired form of support. Most developing countries have so many different linguistic and ethnic subgroups that it would be impossible to give each one its own broadcasting service . . . "5

. . . Nigeria broadcasts in 30 local languages, still far fewer than the number spoken by its 250 tribal groups. Nor is the problem of multilingualism restricted to developing countries. The widespread use of both English and French in Canada and of both Dutch and French in Belgium necessitate full-scale broadcast services in each language. Switzerland broadcasts in five domestic languages. Dutch suffices for all Holland, yet broadcasting there is nevertheless divided into seven distinct services, each representing a different religious or political affiliation . . . " 6

(One would naturally include South African broadcasting at this point, considering the diversity of languages. In addition to radio and television services in Afrikaans and English, Blacks are served by radio in Zulu, Xhosa, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Tswana, Venda and Tsonga. Two television channels for Blacks, TV2 and TV3 entered service in 1982 and 1983 respectively, broadcasting in five African languages.)*

2.2 HEAD'S VIEWS ON PHILOSOPHIES OF AUTHORITARIANISM, PATERNALISM AND PERMISSIVENESS

As a general rule, a country's political philosophy is reflected in its broadcasting system(s). Head⁷

discerns three basic orientations or attitudes that determine how broadcasting is managed, financed and programmed. He refers to these three orientations as authoritarianism, paternalism and permissivism.⁸

Head's views are considered to be so perceptive and relevant to this dissertation that they are included here, in summary form :

2.2.1 Authoritarianism

This attitude characterises the systems adopted in the USSR and other communist countries. The state operates broadcasting and harnesses it directly to the implementation of government policies. In the USSR, broadcasting is a function of the Ministry of Culture, under the guidance of a special committee set up for the purpose by the Council of Ministries. In other communist countries, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Information, or a special administration directly responsible to the top political level oversees broadcasting.

The guiding philosophy of these systems disdains catering to frivolous tastes and wasting time on ideologically barren entertainment. Hence programming under such systems could hardly be called 'popular', and audiences are under constant temptation to seek satisfaction

elsewhere by tuning in (often illegally) to foreign broadcasts. For this reason, according to Vronitsyn⁹, in recent years even the USSR's rigidly doctrinaire approach has been somewhat softened by the realisation that an appeal to popular tastes can serve as a wedge for propaganda.

A somewhat different type of authoritarian attitude prevails in developing countries. A great culture gap separates the educated elite, who provide the political leadership, from the mass of the people, who remain largely untouched by modern education and outlook. Governments in most developing countries vest programme control in departments or ministries that have control of such fields as education, culture or information generally; programme decisions must often be referred to top political leadership. The leaders, not trusting the native common sense of the illiterate and unsophisticated masses, dish up a spoonfed broadcast diet. Authoritarianism of this type prevails even in developing countries that make no claim to socialistic philosophies modelled on the example of communism¹⁰.

2.2.2 Paternalism

The paternalistic attitude shows more faith in the basic intelligence of the masses and in their capacity to

deal with ideas. Its concern is not to suppress information and to dictate conclusions but rather to maintain a healthily balanced programme diet, with neither too much spinach nor too much ice cream for social and psychological well-being. Paternalism assumes

- (1) that popular taste is by definition taste for frivolous entertainment,
- (2) that leaders have the duty to limit the extent to which such tastes are gratified and to balance them with programming of a more serious or cultivated nature, and
- (3) that this experience will gradually ameliorate the low level of popular taste.

Most non-communist industrialised countries practise varying degrees of paternalism in their broadcasting systems. For purposes of comparison, the system of pre-television Great Britain is fitting, for it was originally designed explicitly to avoid the 'mistakes' the British felt had been made in America (Briggs¹¹). The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is a public chartered corporation deriving its revenue from licence fees on receiving sets. Although the state appoints its board of governors and although it has many other links with officialdom, the corporation operates with

a recognisably independent scope of discretion in programme matters within the terms of its charter.

(The BBC system of broadcasting has been admired in many parts of the world and a number of countries, South Africa included, have modelled their own broadcasting systems along similar lines. However, the system does not always appear to travel well, due largely to the complex combination of economic, social, cultural and language problems previously mentioned. It is generally agreed that few public corporation broadcasting systems enjoy the level of autonomy afforded to the BBC.)*

The BBC views its duty to society as a responsibility for basing programme judgements on its own conscientious evaluation of society's best interests. This evaluation has naturally been coloured by the paternalistic outlook of the social class from which the BBC leadership has been drawn. It is revealing, for example, to follow the reluctant acceptance by the BBC of the idea of audience research. In the earlier years, BBC officials simply refused to acknowledge that their own judgements needed to be qualified by objective facts.

The discovery in the late 1930's that a large proportion of the BBC's supposedly loyal audience was actually tuning to a foreign commercial station, Radio Luxembourg, plus the insistent demand for audience facts by producers

of educational programmes, finally broke down the BBC's paternalistic isolationism from the reality of the mass listener's tastes and habits. But not until the 1940's did the BBC seriously embark on systematic scientific audience research.¹² Even so, in 1949, according to Head, a British government committee could report that if research indicated that the public disliked a BBC series,

" . . . such findings would be considered with the utmost care and weighed with other considerations which were relevant. But the decision, when taken, would be a responsible decision, come to in the light of what was considered ultimately to be in the best interests of the public and the service." (Head quoting Madow¹³).

As recently as 1960 a BBC official could write :

"The real degradation of the BBC started with the invention of the hellish department which is called 'Listener Research'. That Abominable Statistic is supposed to show 'what the listeners like' - and, of course, what they like is the red-nosed comedian and the Wurlitzer organ."¹⁴

The BBC philosophy of today holds that neither extreme paternalism nor extreme permissivism makes any sense.

The question remains however : Can a balance between the extremes be ideally attained by any single organisation? Or does effective balance require an interplay of two or more organisations representing alternative points of view? *(This is an issue of direct relevance to broadcasting monopoly in South Africa and is a major argument in favour of competition.)** A BBC official told a government investigating committee that it recognised the "risk of paternalism" in its policy of "giving the lead" to public taste but that it was a risk that had to be taken¹⁵. The risk could be eliminated - or at least the danger could be decreased - by the presence of another organisation representing another philosophy of programming¹⁶.

2.2.3 Permissiveness

Broadcasting in America provides the major example of permissiveness. In the United States, government operation of broadcasting was briefly considered but quickly ruled out in favour of private operation subject to federal licensing and the general requirement that stations operate "in the public interest, convenience, and necessity". Interpretation of this phrase in practice is left largely to the broadcasters themselves, so government control over programming is minimal, in keeping with the constitutional guarantee of freedom

*Author's italics

of speech and press.

After a little more hesitancy, alternative ideas for financing the new medium were ruled out in favour of allowing stations to support themselves through the sale of broadcast advertising. These two decisions automatically made the primary criterion of commercial programming whatever seems most popular with most people. The profit incentive, freed from independent standards of programme content, resulted in catering to the common denominators of popular taste.

American commercial broadcasters have surpassed all others in skillfully producing mass entertainment and exploiting it as a vehicle of advertising. The result is a broadcast service characterised by an extraordinarily high degree of technical competence devoted to programming of which an extraordinarily high proportion consists of light entertainment. The American commercial approach to programming has focused attention on finding out what the mass of the people want - or what they think they want, or what they are most likely to accept (some critics argue that the people either do not really know what they 'want' or merely learn to 'want' what they are given). This approach has required, of course, intensive development of audience research.

The permissive system has been extraordinarily successful in quantitative terms - partly because of its permissiveness but also because broadcasting developed at the critical moment in time to participate in America's mid-century economic boom. Broadcast advertising played a major role in the consumer revolution. It helped to create and has benefitted by the enormously expanding mass market for consumer goods and services.

American broadcasting thus developed largely unhampered within the permissive framework of the free-enterprise system. The style of American broadcasting has been characterised by all the pragmatism, aggressiveness, materialism, improvisation, expansionism, and free-swinging competitiveness of American marketing. Whatever its critics may say, the overall result has been a more lively, inventive, and varied broadcasting system than can be found elsewhere in the world.

Not only can America afford to support far more broadcasting stations than other countries, but the dynamics of its system have also produced a far greater variety of stations. American broadcasting has responded to the infinitely varied demands of the marketplace so that despite an average sameness, a close look reveals at least some stations devoted to almost every kind

of special interest - not only stations of great size and reach in metropolitan areas but also tiny, localised stations within metropolitan areas and in small communities; not only stations motivated by profit but also non-profit stations licensed to educational institutions, foundations, and municipalities; stations not only combined into massive networks but also operated independently; not only stations devoted to trashy entertainment but also stations devoted to education, culture and a wide range of minority tastes; stations using not only English but also many other languages.

Even so, most governments disapprove of the extreme permissiveness of the American commercial system, with its emphasis on what people 'want' rather than what they 'need'. They feel that programming cannot be left entirely to the uncontrolled interaction of popular supply and demand but must be balanced in accordance with judgements about the need to preserve national cultural traditions and about the relative importance of information, education and entertainment.

Americans in general, with their diverse ethnic origins and their carelessness about language, seem to feel no chauvinistic anxiety that broadcasting may undermine the national cultural identity or debase the purity of the English tongue (see Newman¹⁷). Indeed, recent

trends have been towards preserving ethnic diversity, alternative lifestyles, dialects of English and foreign languages and towards encouraging the expression of all of these in broadcasting. By contrast, most other countries closely monitor broadcasting to keep it from diluting their national cultural heritage and debasing the purity of the national language or languages. Many countries impose ceilings on the amount of television programming that may be imported from abroad. Some American commentators are critical of many of the social effects of permissive broadcasting. Paulu, an American who has extensive experience of European broadcasting systems comments :

"Europe can look to American broadcasting for enthusiasm and drive as well as for production ingenuity. But the United States can acquire from Europe the concepts that broadcasting is a public service rather than an industry, and that programme policies should be determined by social values rather than investment returns."¹⁸

Many South Africans in a position to make comparisons would probably agree with Paulu. Certainly permissiveness on the American scale is inconceivable in South Africa, where broadcasting planners have traditionally looked to Europe for direction and will almost certainly

continue to do so.

Head is quick to point out that the three prototypes of authoritarianism, paternalism and permissivism exist nowhere in "pure form". American commercial broadcasting's permissiveness is tinged with a sense of responsibility¹⁹. The BBC's paternalism is qualified by a "duty to keep sensitively aware of the public's tastes and attitudes as they now are"²⁰. The USSR's authoritarianism if only calculatingly, finds "paternalistic head-patting and occasional permissive eye-winking sometimes to its advantage"²¹.

2.3 THE TREND TOWARDS PLURALISM

Head emphasises that even with the best of intentions, a single institution (or group of institutions ruled by a single philosophy) tends towards rigidity. Commenting on over half a century of broadcasting experience he maintains a pluralistic system seems best able to assure that the medium will develop its full potentialities within a given national framework. A single monolithic system seems to inevitably cramp the potentialities of the medium in one respect or another. By providing divergent methods of programme control and alternative programming philosophies, a pluralistic

system introduces elements of diversity and competition. Pluralism also prevents a system from drifting too far away from the realities of audience interests and tends to stimulate creativity and innovation²².

The popularity of the European pirate broadcasting stations in the 1960's illustrates the consumer's need for choice in programming. These off-shore pirate stations swiftly commanded large audiences, particularly among young people and created national demands that could not be ignored. In 1965 the popularity of a television station operating off the coast of Holland escalated the issue of commercial television to the point where it caused the resignation of the Dutch cabinet²³. The pirates made the monolithic systems of Europe acutely aware of neglected audience tastes. Britain and other western European countries significantly liberalised their broadcasting policies to serve audiences whose wants had theretofore been unsuspected or ignored²⁴.

The trend towards pluralistic systems of broadcasting has advanced with increasing tolerance of advertising. Although the majority of the earlier radio broadcasting systems were non-commercial, today over 60 percent of the world's national television systems operate commercially, wholly or in part. Alternatively, in countries like the United States, which started with

commercialism, the emergent element is a viable non-commercial service. In either case, the trend is pluralistic²⁵.

The unique advantages of television advertising are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 as, apart from it being the most painless and least discriminatory way of taxing the set-owner, it performs a useful function in the national economy. A BBC researcher monitoring world developments in the 1960's tells of a visit to a Japanese home. The house was traditional in every way except for an array of electric kitchen utensils. The housewife explained that "until she saw TV advertising, she didn't even know such gadgets existed" (Cawston²⁶).

Head argues that dependence on advertising income focuses management's attention on objective analysis of audiences and their desires, providing a counterbalance to non-commercial services, which respond less sensitively to popular taste. Advertising by its very nature stresses competition and so provides a spur to innovation and creativity²⁷.

This is undoubtably true, but it focuses attention on the most controversial area of commercial television, namely how far should responsible television go in trying to gratify popular taste? The answer can only lie in

interest. Independent television was vastly profitable from the very start. By offering viewers a choice of a second channel with a range of programmes that were later to be heavily criticised in the Pilkington Report of 1962²⁸, it quickly commanded large audiences so that by the late 1950's the BBC's share of the television audience had dwindled to 30 percent. Almost everyone had switched to ITV, whose directors, after a few shaky moments to begin with, were themselves making fortunes that even they had never seen in prospect²⁹. Television advertising jumped from \$4,8 million in 1955 to \$160 million by 1960. As Lord Thomson said, in a famous phrase that both he and others have since regretted, "A television licence is a licence to print money".³⁰ While ITV counted the money, the BBC was at first inclined to fall back upon a pompous insistence that "come what may it would not change its principles". But, according to Green, a corporation that takes the public money for licence fees, cannot do so with very good grace if most of the public is not looking at it (a situation that had never faced the BBC before, because there was no viewing alternative)³¹.

2.4 COMPETITION IN BROADCASTING

A fundamental change in BBC philosophy proved to be the

turning point for the corporation, resulting in the BBC facing ITV's competition head-on and winning back much of its lost audiences.

The cornerstone of this new philosophy was the new director general of the BBC, Hugh Greene. Greene brought to the job nearly 30 years of professional journalism and broadcasting experience and had no doubts about what must be done ³².

" . . . I wanted to encourage enterprise and the taking of risks. I wanted to make the BBC a place where talent of all sorts, however unconventional, was recognised and nurtured, where talented people could work and, if they wished, take their talents elsewhere, sometimes coming back again to enrich the organisation from which they had started. I may have thought at the beginning that I should be dragging the BBC kicking and screaming into the sixties. But I soon learnt that some urge, some encouragement was what all the immense reserve of youthful talent in the BBC had been waiting for, and from that moment I was part of the rapidly flowing stream . . . "33.

This imaginative and dynamic spirit infused the whole corporation and was a major factor along with the stimulus provided by ITV competition in the BBC's television

service ultimately being regarded by many media commentators as 'the best in the world'.

The Pilkington Report paid tribute to the BBC by stating:

" . . . the BBC knows good broadcasting and by and large they are providing it. Our broad conclusion is this : that within the limitations imposed by a single programme (the BBC had not been allocated its second channel at this time), the BBC's television service is a successful realisation of the purposes of broadcasting as defined in the charter . . . ".³⁴

The bulk of the criticism aimed at television was levelled at ITV :

" . . . We conclude that the dissatisfaction with television can largely be ascribed to the independent television service. Its concept of balance does not satisfy the varied and many-sided tastes and interests of the public. In the field of entertainment - and not least in light entertainment - there is much that lacks quality . . . the service of independent television does not successfully realise the purposes of broadcasting as defined in the Television Act . . . ".³⁵

What lessons, if any, can be applied from the above to

future innovations in commercial television in South Africa? Probably the most significant is the need for regulation to ensure that any new television service provides the type of broadcasting for which it was instigated. In the South African situation a new Act of Parliament would be necessary setting out the guidelines for the operation of independent television.

The Pilkington Report showed up the inadequacy of the original Television Act of 1954. Independent television was more tightly regulated under the new Television Act of 1964 which stipulated much closer scrutiny of programme schedules and the imposition of a tax levy on advertising revenue - by the end of the 1960's as much as 25 percent of advertising revenue was being siphoned off at once by the government³⁶.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), like the BBC, is a non-profit, chartered corporation. It owns and operates all the transmission facilities used by the commercial broadcasting companies. It appoints separate companies to serve individual (regional) areas of Britain. The private programme companies rent transmission facilities from the IBA, supply the programming and sell the advertising. The IBA is thus responsible under the IBA Act of 1973 for the strict control of both programming policies and advertising practices.

Advertisers are unable to interfere with programming in any way. Sponsorship of programmes is prohibited by the Act. This division of responsibilities restrains the influence of commercial interests because it gives the IBA no reason to defer to advertisers. It can fine a contracting programme company for infringement of rules and can even cancel its contract altogether. When franchises come up for renewal they may be awarded to what the IBA considers to be other more deserving companies. The test is always : which of the competitors for the regional broadcasting franchise is likely to make the best contribution to the quality of independent television services? From a South African viewpoint, it is worth noting that the companies are awarded regional contracts so no single company achieves a dominant position, nor can regional interests be neglected.

The above would indicate that the effect of independent television on the SABC would take various forms, some of them detrimental but this would probably be a short-term phenomenon. In the longer term, the SABC can have very little to fear from competition and should benefit in a number of substantial ways. The SABC's experience, size and special position as state broadcasting corporation will ensure that it will be able to rise to meet the competition provided by an independent regional television service and will be the better for

it. SABC-TV should be allowed to consolidate and improve its services of TV1, TV2 and TV3, all centralised, national operations, based on Johannesburg. Revenue should continue to come from the two sources of television set licences and advertising. Fears that SABC-TV will lose valuable advertising revenue to its regional independent competitors are probably not justified. At the moment SABC-TV's advertising comes from the major national organisations. The smaller local businesses cannot afford national advertising rates of up to ± R9 500 (at 1983 prices) for 30 seconds of exposure at peak viewing time. Even if they could afford these rates, plus the additional high costs of making the commercial, they would be buying 'wasted exposure' as their marketing objectives are regional in range of operation, rather than national. What would certainly happen is that more regional advertising would be generated. There would inevitably be some switching of advertising from other media notably the press, outdoor and cinema. This does of course raise issues regarding the survival of these other media, an aspect fundamental to proposals made elsewhere in this dissertation. Essentially, however, where the development of television has been encouraged, after a period of sometimes fairly painful rationalisation, the other media have re-emerged fitter and more competitive, ready to face the challenge of new technology. A fundamental

point is that independent television should, in fact, mean more advertising in the economy, not merely the same amount being divided up by more media. (See also Chapter 1, reference 5 re: South African advertising expenditure expressed as a percentage of GNP.)

Another fear possibly harboured by the SABC management would be that the new service would tempt away valuable staff members. Expensively trained technicians, directors, writers and performers could be offered lucrative contracts to join the opposition. To some extent this is bound to happen. However, it could be argued that the future of the South African television industry as a whole can only benefit if employment opportunities are opened up through the mechanism of the free market, where workers can sell their services to competing employers rather than to only one employer. Ultimately cross-fertilisation of this kind, brought about by freedom of movement, should benefit all participants and act as a spur to the industry, creating even more job opportunities and leading to higher standards of professionalism. All sections of the South African economy, this argument would maintain, would benefit as a result.

Head presents a persuasive argument setting out the benefits of constructive competition in broadcasting

which pluralism promotes. He makes the point that most highly developed systems now try to provide for it. He cites the German Federal Republic as an example where each of the nine federal political units has its own broadcasting system. When the state decided to broaden programme choice by developing an alternative service, it did not allow the existing broadcasting units to furnish this second service but instead established an entirely separate organisation to compete with existing stations³⁷. French broadcasting, although considered by Head to be one of the most authoritarian systems in the western world, was reorganised in 1974 so as to create at least intramural competition³⁸. New Zealand undertook a thorough study before revamping its national system, one of the principal recommendations being the creation of two networks in order "to bring about a system of 'guided' competition"³⁹. The value of competition was also recognised by the Carnegie Commission in its recommendation for US public television. The commission proposed the establishment of more than one national programme production centre, in part because "competition between two or more centres will act as a spur and will provide a basis for comparison"⁴⁰.

Canada and Japan are other major foreign examples of the pluralistic approach. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, a non-commercial public chartered body,

modelled originally along BBC lines, operates a national network of stations. Privately owned, commercial local stations also exist, but they must carry CBC non-commercial national programmes as well as their own. Japan has a government-sponsored national network, operating side by side with relatively unrestricted private commercial stations⁴¹.

Existing plans for South African television, while moving away from the rigidity of a single channel service towards the provision of additional channels broadcasting in African languages (TV2 and TV3), do not, at the moment, satisfy the criteria for a pluralistic system. This is not to disparage the efforts of the government which obviously had decided that the first priority is to provide some kind of television for all the major language groups in South Africa, a laudable objective, especially considering the complexities of the problems concerning technology, geography and programming. Financial considerations are restrictive. The launching of the new service (TV2/TV3) involved just over R100 million. Of this R70 million represented capital expenditure and approximately R35 million establishment costs⁴². If we accept the economic and social arguments in favour of a pluralistic television service for South Africa, based on the importance of providing viewers with a choice, it would be unrealistic as well as

undesirable to expect the next evolutionary stage for television in South Africa, i.e. a regional television network, to be a mere extension of a state broadcasting monopoly. The logical answer suggests looking to the private sector. The press groups, both English and Afrikaans, would welcome the opportunity to diversify into the electronic media; they have the financial resources and the communication skills. They are also well aware that elsewhere in the western world television has replaced all other media as the principal source of public information. No amount of wishful thinking can reverse the clock. South African viewers have had their appetites whetted by eight years of SABC television. They are rapidly becoming aware of the quality and range of television services offered overseas and are certain to demand similar benefits. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the offer of television was used in the 1966 South African election as a carrot to win votes. It failed miserably. It would be interesting to see how the offer of additional improved television services would fare in a general election today.

Although it would be expected that the South African press would welcome the opportunity to diversify into television, the ownership structure would need to be controlled to prevent too much power being vested in

too few hands. Suitable safeguards in terms of qualifications for ownership and permissible stock holdings would have to be worked out, but there are several examples of such control systems currently in use in other countries; a suitable adaptation for South Africa is offered in Chapter 10. Diversity of ownership would be in the best interests of the proposed new regional network, the widest possible range of South African economic activity should be encouraged to be represented.

2.5 GOVERNMENT ATTITUDES TO BROADCASTING

In any democracy, government involvement in broadcasting is inevitable. It has to consider what type of broadcasting organisation would best serve the interests of the population. Policies are necessary regarding programming and financing. Technical considerations have to be regulated to prevent electronic chaos and the worst excesses of commercial exploitation. The 1959 Geneva Convention, for example, stipulates that every radio station must be licensed by its government⁴³.

The major reason for government involvement is the recognition of the importance of broadcasting as a method of communication - communication power that can of

course be used for good or harm. As radio and television are considered primarily to be public services, broadcasting organisations are obliged to provide information, education and entertainment to meet the requirements of the indigenous cultural groups forming the population. Because broadcasting is directed straight into the home, certain moral justifications for regulation are provided, particularly with regard to violence, obscenity and profanity (social issues of television and advertising are considered in Chapters 4, 5 and 6). It is interesting to note that because of television's unique combination of vision, sound and capability for 'live' and recorded broadcasting, requirements for public service are more stringent for broadcasters than for the press. South Africa is no exception to this rule.

Broadcasting grows out of, reflects and contributes to its environment. Government attitudes towards broadcasting, therefore, are just one aspect of their prevailing theories about information media in general. Where the basic philosophy favours freedom of expression, there probably will be freedom for all means of communication including both printed and electronic media. On the other hand, governments which control information as a general principle probably will control all communication media. Most west European countries

follow a free press policy, while those in the communist east have government-controlled systems⁴⁴.

In a preface to describing different broadcasting organisations, Paulu⁴⁵ considers that John Milton in 1644 outlined the issues concerning freedom when he declared "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties". If truth and falsehood should be in contest, he continued, "who ever knew truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?"⁴⁶. Paulu also quotes from John Stuart Mill in his famous essay 'On Liberty'⁴⁷:

"If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. Were an opinion a personal possession of no value except to the owner; if to be obstructed in the enjoyment of it were simply a private injury, it would make some difference whether the injury was inflicted only on a few persons or on many. But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it.

If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."⁴⁸

Democratic issues like the freedom of speech and freedom of the press are well summarised by the distinguished American historian Carl Becker⁴⁹ in 1944 :

" . . . The democratic doctrine of freedom of speech and of the press, whether we regard it as a natural and inalienable right or not, rests upon certain assumptions. One of these is that men desire to know the truth and will be disposed to be guided by it Another is that the sole method of arriving at the truth in the long run is by the free competition of opinion in the open market Another is that, since men will inevitably differ in their opinions, each man must be permitted to urge, freely and even strenuously, his own opinion, provided he accords to others the same right And the final assumption is that from this mutual toleration and compassion of diverse opinions the one that seems the most rational will emerge and be generally accepted . . . "⁵⁰

To expect complete freedom in the South African context, would be unrealistic and more than a little naive, when one considers that it hardly exists anywhere in the world, as most governments feel duty bound, for reasons previously stated, to impose some limitations. However, on a comparative basis, broadcasting in South Africa appears excessively restrictive when examined alongside other western systems.

The SABC's claim to be an impartial, autonomous public institution independent from government strictures, is the subject of much comment, a great deal of it bitter and vitriolic. Criticisms of this kind are, of course, normal when discussing state broadcasting systems but the sheer magnitude of criticism aimed at the SABC both from within South Africa and from the outside world place it in a class of its own. The following example (October, 1981) illustrates the controversy. Mr Pik Botha, Minister of External Affairs and Information, in addressing a National Party congress said that the government and the SABC hierarchy continually "consult each other" about news coverage and the choice of television programmes. This incensed a number of political and media correspondents in the English language press and gave rise to a number of highly critical leading articles and political cartoons. James McClurg, respected media columnist of the Rand Daily Mail, writing

in its sister publication The Cape Times, had this to say :

" . . . How hollow in retrospect seem Sir John Reith's confident words when, in his report to the South African government, he recommended that the SABC be set up as an autonomous public institution : 'It is obvious that freedom from public interference includes freedom from any sort of political influence, overt or hidden. It is almost inevitable that members have political opinions, but these will not be permitted to influence those in whom so serious a responsibility would be vested. They would not take advice, much less instructions, from the parties to which their political allegiance was given.' . . . Should the SABC treat politics and politicians with disdain? Certainly not; they are an important part of the real world which it is the corporation's duty to reflect. In this real world there is no reason why a political party, including the NP, should not make representations to the SABC where it feels, for instance, that it has not been fairly treated. But approaches from the government, as the executive arm of the state, are only permissible by way of exception and then under strict safeguards."⁵¹

Generally speaking, western democratic governments are reluctant to become openly involved in attempts to influence broadcasting policy for fear of violating constitution tenets regarding freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The communist world, on the other hand, has always recognised and encouraged the role of the media in propagating ideology. According to Stalin :

"The press is the prime instrument through which the Party speaks daily, hourly, with the working class in its own indispensable language. No other means such as this for weaving spiritual ties between Party and class, no other tool so flexible, is to be found in nature."⁵²

Although Stalin was describing the press, how much more significant is his statement when applied to the electronic media.

The Constitution of the USSR guarantees citizens free speech and a free press but a careful rereading of the introductory phrase shows that there is freedom of speech only for those who will use it to support the established order and not for those who wish to question its basic principles. The mass media are not to present uncensored information from a wide range of sources;

they are to play a positive role in developing the socialist system⁵³.

Throughout the socialist bloc, broadcasting is a state-controlled monopoly. All eastern Europe follows the Soviet pattern, with programming responsibility assigned to broadcasting committees of actual or near ministerial status and with financial support derived mainly from public funds. Most systems have some advertising, although except in Yugoslavia such revenue is not a significant part of the total budget. Transmitting and connecting links are run by ministries of communications. Also involved are the government agencies concerned with education, culture, propaganda and censorship. Always important is the Communist Party, although it is difficult to determine the exact relationship between government, party and broadcasters⁵⁴.

Critics of broadcasting in South Africa, and indeed media commentators in general, often point to an alleged degree of similarity between the South African and Soviet systems. This similarity, whether it has come about by dictate of the peculiar circumstances of South Africa's social and economic evolution, or by political motivation, is, according to critics, possibly one of the strongest arguments in favour of granting the SABC a much greater degree of autonomy to carry out its mandate as an

impartial, public service corporation, dedicated to providing South Africans with the best possible broadcasting service in terms of entertainment, information and education. It is also seen as a powerful argument for introducing a pluralistic broadcasting system in keeping with the best interests of a free enterprise society and the pursuit of democracy.

The degree of government involvement or 'guidance' in broadcasting is therefore manifested in censorship and the control of news. One aspect of this concerns the amount of exposure given to political opponents. Lenin was quite specific in his thinking :

"Why should a government which is doing what it believes to be right allow itself to be criticised? It would not allow opposition by lethal weapons, and ideas are much more fatal than guns."⁵⁵

The Argus picks up this theme in an editorial on a programme about Soweto and the Baragwanath Hospital which serves its Black community :

". . . One can only guess at the harm the SABC has done to South Africa in the way it prevents the whole truth from reaching its listeners and viewers. South Africa and its govern-

ment always present a benign face to the world through SABC microphones and cameras. This is the corporation's intention. It believes it is being patriotic. It is a false patriotism. It deludes people, especially those to whom newspapers are not readily available, and it helps to produce an electorate unfit to choose a good government and to judge official policies . . . "56

In similar vein, Gary Edwards, news editor of Capital Radio, the independent radio station broadcasting from Transkei, was alleged to have been critical of what the SABC regarded as news. He was also reported as disagreeing with its policy of 'sectionalising news on a racial basis'. Very little Soweto news, according to Edwards, ever got near White ears because of the SABC's policy of presenting 'White news for White ears'⁵⁷.

SABC monopoly in television broadcasting has inevitably led to a great deal of criticism concerning programme content in general. Stanley Uys expresses the feeling that bureaucracy has rendered the corporation immobile and insensitive to the need for change within South Africa :

" . . . I cannot believe that the sheer awfulness of SATV is due to lack of

talent in the organisation (*SABC*). There can be only one explanation . . . that the heavy hand of officialdom stifles all imagination and enterprise . . .

. . . If producers, editors, actors, cameramen and so forth are allowed to flex their talents, they will grow with the job and SATV will improve. But everything withers under the heavy hand of bureaucracy . . .

. . . In many ways the problem is a political one. Respect for authority seeps through every crack in the crumbling SATV structure. It conditions all attitudes. It is bad enough when a minister is being interviewed. The interviewer practically comes in on his knees and, at the end, withdraws without turning his back on Authority.

But even in panel discussions, there is no spontaneity, or humour, and very little information either. It is all so ponderous . . .

. . . Surely, if Mr Botha is trying to open people's eyes, there is no quicker way to do it than through television. It's the easiest way, for example, to get a Black man into White drawing-rooms . . .

. . . SATV in a sense symbolises much of what Mr Botha is trying to eradicate : the old, inflexible order which, haunted

by the spectres of the past, has locked itself in immobility . . . "58

State broadcasting corporations, particularly where they enjoy a monopoly, are always open to severe criticism regarding propaganda and their alleged role as tools of government policy. When Mr Alf Widman, the chief opposition spokesman, moved an amendment, declining to pass the budget for the Post Office "unless the SABC introduced an unbiased news service"⁵⁹, a fierce row erupted in the House of Assembly. The row intensified when Mr Dave Dalling, chief opposition spokesman on the media and Mr Brian Page, the chief spokesman for the New Republic Party said that the corporation was "nothing more than a propaganda arm of the National Party". Attacking Broederbond involvement in the SABC, Mr Page said it was run "by the broeders, for the broeders". Mr Dalling, quoting from a recent book on the Broederbond, which had said that the organisation's aim had been the 'Afrikanerisation' of English speakers, said that this had been the policy of Dr P.J. Meyer (*the then retiring Chairman of the SABC, now replaced by Professor W.L. Mouton*). "He (Dr Meyer) had put the Broederbond ahead of South Africa."⁶⁰ In his reply to the debate Mr Smit said that :

". . . the claim that the SABC was no more

than a tool of the NP was unsubstantiated. Opposition members gained a biased impression of what they had seen . . .

. . . Opposition demands that TV programmes be dubbed and broadcast in the alternative language on FM was no more than a veiled attack on bilingualism"

Mr Smit said:

"Less than 10 percent of the people interviewed in an independent survey had indicated that they were dissatisfied with SABC news. Leaders in Africa who were opposed to the government in fact lauded the objectivity of SABC news . . ." ⁶¹

Stanley Uys criticises the SABC for what he sees as its lack of autonomy and its failure to reflect changes in society and the national mood :

"SABC TV since its inception, has been under total political control. It is no more an autonomous body than my eye . . .

. . . It does not attempt to hold up a mirror of the world around it nor does it even pretend that it is its duty, fully and fearlessly, to reflect changes in society and in the national mood . . .

. . . the SABC is controlled by a bunch of political heavies who not only do

what they think their political masters want them to do, but do so without any imagination or style . . . SABC TV must stop presenting TV as a largely Whites-only medium in which, ponderously and boringly, the orthodoxies of a White-supremacist society, and the pieties of a heavily-censored society, are dished up as news and culture . . .

. . . South Africa is not only a multi-racial society, but a changing one, too, and if it is to change with the minimum of violence, the realities of life should be explained to the White public - and TV is a highly effective medium to do this . . . "62

Mr Uys argues that an independent and representative board of SABC governors should be appointed who would be autonomous and run the SABC without political interference⁶³.

Mr Ken French, one of South Africa's most respected film makers, commented on political interference with South African television when he noted the 'imbalance' between the English and Afrikaans services in terms of personnel, budgets and equipment :

". . . It was common knowledge in the film industry . . . that there were astronomical imbalances between English and Afrikaans service budgets and that

the best crews were to be found in the Afrikaans service . . . "64.

French described these and other features about SATV as "ominous and part of the total design". He is reported as being convinced that SATV would be more adventurous if viewers had a choice of channels⁶⁵.

The repeated criticisms that the SABC does not reflect South African life and that it has failed to achieve autonomy from political influence, have resulted in demands, particularly from English speakers and the official opposition, for top management of the corporation to change and for new thinking to be applied to broadcasting. When a BBC commission was called on to assist in setting up Zimbabwe's revised broadcasting system after independence, it found that programmes and editorial decisions were subject to political considerations. For example, radio and television tried to give Whites the impression that they were winning the war as the situation, in fact, deteriorated. A member of Mr Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front Party claimed that Whites were deceived by their own propaganda. The result was that the governments of Mr Smith and Bishop Muzorewa had no idea that Mr Robert Mugabe enjoyed majority support in the country⁶⁶. The Argus at the same time took the view in an editorial that :

"There is a lesson here for South Africa. Many of Mr P.W. Botha's difficulties in getting his more conservative countrymen to accept the need for change probably stem from the fact that the SABC does little to tell the real story of what is happening in South Africa."⁶⁷

The 1980 Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media provided an excellent opportunity for South African broadcasting to be examined in the light of the commission's terms of reference :

*'to inquire into and report on the question whether the conduct of, and the handling of matters by the mass media meet the needs and interests of the South African community and the demands of the times, and if not, how they can be improved'*⁶⁸.

However, this examination of the mass media has been interpreted by the newspapers, particularly the English press, as a new move to curb the influence of the press.

The president of the Newspaper Press Union of South Africa (NPU), Mr R.W.J. Opperman, said the NPU could not understand why the government had appointed a commission of inquiry into the mass media and objected to its establishment. Its terms of reference he said had already been largely covered by the Cillie Commission

which investigated the unrest throughout the country in 1976 and the manner in which the media dealt with it, and by the first Steyn Commission which investigated the reporting of defence and police matters in the press. He also considered the same ground had been covered, to a large extent, by the Rabie Commission which was reviewing security legislation⁶⁹.

Very little coverage was given to a wider interpretation of the media commission's terms of reference and the possible ramifications for broadcasting in South Africa were largely ignored by the press in their speculation and suspicions of government intentions.

It is to be expected that the press formed the main focus of the inquiry as it was, and will continue to be for some time, the major source of information for most South Africans. But it was a cause for regret that the electronic media, particularly television were not treated with the importance they deserved in an investigation of this nature. The Commission of Inquiry would have been more representative of the interests of all South Africans if it :

- had explored the inherent dangers of broadcasting monopoly;
- had investigated more fully the accusations of

political bias and the propagation of political ideology;

- had examined the possibility of private enterprise offering an alternative, competitive television service⁷⁰.

By and large, the South African press seems aware of its responsibilities and jealously guards its freedom, so it was understandable that in the prevailing political climate any new commission of inquiry would be seen as a threat. Whatever is said about the political views of newspapers, they are the product of private enterprise and the public is free to choose between them or ignore them. However, when it comes to broadcasting, the South African public is not free to choose. There are no alternatives to state monopoly and all broadcasting is entirely financed by the taxpayer. This being so, The Argus makes the point that :

" . . . there is cause for deep public concern when a former SABC television producer, Mr Kevin Harris, tells the Steyn Commission under oath that the National Party and the Broederbond have a stranglehold on the country's broadcasting services"⁷¹.

Adding :

"The commission should probe his charges expeditiously and thoroughly"⁷².

It is worth recording that even though the protests tended to be loudest from the English language press concerning what they regarded as 'yet another inquiry into the press', the Afrikaans newspapers also spoke out against any potential erosion of their freedom.

Mr Ton Vosloo, editor of Beeld, saw the Steyn Commission as a chance to free the press from present legal restrictions. In evidence before the commission, he said :

"The freedom of speech as embodied in a free Press should be entrenched by Parliament . . . there should be a diversity in the media and in media ownership . . .

The electronic media, such as radio and TV, should also not be the sole possession of the State, but should be gradually disconnected."⁷³

Mr Vosloo urged that the powers of the present Press Council be extended to initiate investigations into contraventions of the Press code⁷⁴.

In discussing the broad principles of democracy and responsible broadcasting, the peculiarities of the

South African political climate and the heterogeneous nature of its population cannot be ignored. The country's history is also of paramount importance, particularly with regard to systems of government. It seems difficult to imagine a form of government based on the British parliamentary system that results in such unremitting conflict with such a large section of the press. South Africa does enjoy a free press, but nevertheless the complexities of the situation tend to increase press anxiety that press freedom could be a transient state. All governments have the power and indeed the duty to sanction the worst excesses of an irresponsible press, but perhaps nowhere else in the western world does the threat to press freedom appear so menacing or continually imminent. This conflict and threat situation, must be due, in part, to South Africa's history and heterogeneous population. Vatcher⁷⁵, in discussing systems of government, highlights the problem when he says :

"Successful responsible cabinet government assumes the existence of a relatively homogeneous population sharing similar values, a situation not found in South Africa. Moreover, the British system of government assumes that those who participate in it understand and accept its rules

. . . The system of government in the

old Boer republics was quite different, and much more authoritarian. Before Union, the British system worked well in Natal and the Cape under such stalwarts as Rhodes, Schreiner and Merriman because they understood and accepted its rules. The same might be said of the Union under Botha, Smuts and the coalitions of Hertzog, although the system was perhaps less satisfactory. But the British type of parliamentary government has always been repugnant to extremists such as Malan, Strijdom, and Verwoerd, both because it was British and because it was not in harmony with their aims or their philosophy of government. In the British system each political party accepts the structure, but differs in terms of conduct and ideology within the structure. In South Africa, parties tend to reflect racial, religious and cultural differences rather than philosophical ones, and are the more keenly felt . . . "76.

The evolution of broadcasting along more democratic lines and particularly innovations such as the emergence of pluralistic broadcasting systems originating in the private sector, are inextricably bound up with the Afrikaner's assessment of his culture's survival. In a speech to an American audience at the Houston World Trade Center, in October 1981, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr Chris Heunis said :

"Only reactionaries still believed the Afrikaner could survive through political protectionism or military might . . . the Afrikaner had come of age - and that this heralded a beautiful new dispensation for all of us . . . now approaching fast"⁷⁷.

Emphasising that the status quo in South Africa could not and should not be maintained, Mr Heunis said :

". . . the Afrikaner no longer needed a laager to protect him . . . It was true that the Afrikaner had long relied on 'protectionist' policies, but he could now assert himself without special treatment from the government"⁷⁸.

Paulu divides broadcasting systems into two categories : those in which broadcasting and government are closely related and those in which they are not. In the former case, since the government usually provides the funding and often controls the output, broadcasting is apt to become a government mouthpiece. From the democratic point of view, this is undesirable, for which reason those western countries with close government-broadcaster relationships make great efforts to ensure the freedom of the media. The United Kingdom has been outstandingly successful in this respect. The United States, facing this problem for the first time in funding public broadcasting, is having great difficulty working out a

satisfactory solution. In the socialist countries, of course, closeness of media and government is considered an advantage⁷⁹.

South Africa, in a sense, is at a cross-roads. If, as Mr Heunis indicates, there is to be a "new beautiful dispensation" to include all South Africans, then broadcasting's role in the pursuit of democracy will need to be reviewed. The SABC should actively seek, and be granted, a degree of autonomy beyond reasonable doubt and the unnatural constraints on the development of the medium of television should be removed by active government encouragement for a pluralistic system permitting the participation of the private sector in television broadcasting, with due regard for the social responsibilities inherent in all mass media.

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CHAPTER 3BROADCASTING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Proposals concerning the future of television broadcasting in South Africa cannot be made, or would certainly not be credible without evidence of an historical perspective comprising the origins, special circumstances and subsequent development of broadcasting and its impact on the complex and heterogeneous South African society.

In formulating this chapter, the writer is indebted to the excellent reference by Peter B. Orlik entitled The South African Broadcasting Corporation : An Historical Survey and Contemporary Analysis. This dissertation was submitted to the Office for Graduate Studies, Graduate Division of Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, USA in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1968.

The author wishes to acknowledge the contribution Dr Orlik's work has made to recording the fascinating early history of the SABC and to facilitating further research.

3.1 RADIO'S IMPRESSIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

In 1897 Edward Jennings, a Port Elizabeth Post Office engineer, claimed to have "invented wireless telegraphy independently of Marconi, but to have received no encouragement"¹.

Later during the South African war the Boers imported wireless telegraphy sets from Germany for use against the British, but it is generally considered that they proved of little practical value to either side at the time².

It was not really until the end of the First World War that new technology ushered in the origins of wireless telephony or 'radio' in South Africa.

The government recognised the popularity of the new medium and its future potential and in August 1923 issued regulations to ensure that progress would be orderly. The Postmaster-General was given the power to grant licences for the establishment of radio transmitters as well as for the ownership of receiving sets by members of the public. Listeners were required to contract with the licensed broadcaster in their area and to pay him standard 'prescribed charges' for his service in addition to the five shillings per annum paid directly

to the Post Office in order to obtain a listener's licence³. The regulations also granted the broadcaster certain rights which included the right to "hire out receiving sets", the previously mentioned right to contract with listeners in the providing of service, and the right to "make contracts with advertisers to disseminate advertising matter for not more than six minutes in any hour"⁴.

In order to raise funds for South Africa's participation in the Empire Show at Wembley in England, it was decided at the end of 1923 to broadcast a series of concerts. A broadcasting committee was formed from South African Railways personnel and a temporary broadcasting station was set up in Johannesburg's Railway Head Office⁵. The broadcast began with Prime Minister Smuts addressing the nation from a Pretoria military hospital via a special telephone hook-up. The occasion was described in the press as a "broadcasting triumph". Enthusiastic listeners reported good reception at distances of up to 1 000 miles but, as engineers were subsequently to discover, many of these listeners had allowed their enthusiasm to grossly colour their perception⁶.

The success of the Railway experiment led to the decision for the Associated Scientific and Technical Societies, ASTS, to take over responsibility for broadcasting.

The facility was moved to new premises on the roof of Stuttaford's Building on Prichard Street. July 1, 1924 marked the beginning of regular broadcasting from Johannesburg⁷.

Sir David de Villiers Graaff, a leading citizen and Member of Parliament, was keen to ensure that Cape Town, too, would enjoy the benefits of radio. He offered to donate funds for a transmitter and studio. The city fathers at first declined the offer but finally relented when the Publicity Association came out in support of the scheme, as they saw in radio the means of extending the audience for its orchestra. Cape Town went on the air on September 15, 1924 at a cost to Sir David of £6 000⁸.

Durban was soon to follow the lead of Johannesburg and Cape Town and began regular broadcasts from December 10, 1924, establishing the broadcasting 'triangle' which was to be considered the prime route for South Africa's programme origination and distribution for so many years to come⁹.

As public interest in the new medium grew, more and more receiving sets were purchased. An accompanying problem with the growth in listeners was the refusal of many listeners or set owners to pay their licence

fees. The broadcasters had petitioned the Postmaster-General to assume responsibility for collection of licence revenue. The petition was successful but the subsequent efforts of the Postmaster-General's department were no more productive than those of the broadcasters themselves¹⁰.

Indeed by the middle of 1926, listener 'negligence' in the payment of licence fees had reached such proportions that the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs felt compelled to push through Parliament a new and stronger Radio Act. Through the Act, the Minister acquired absolute control over radio transmission and reception and could fix licence fees for both stations and receivers as he saw fit. The Act also included severe penalties for certain infringements of regulations. Failure to procure a listener's licence was punishable by the confiscation of the set and a fine of up to five pounds¹¹.

In spite of the new legislation and numerous prosecutions listeners were still reluctant to purchase licences. At the time the Johannesburg station executives stated that half of the 9 000 known radio set owners in that city had not bothered to purchase a licence. As a result, the station was forced to close down in January 1927¹².

When the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce petitioned the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs requesting that assurances be provided to any private organisation which might be interested in taking over the defunct broadcasting operation that the government would strictly enforce payment of licence fees and vigorously prosecute non-payers, the Minister, Mr Madeley replied in a telegram indicating that the government was thinking along quite different (and very significant) lines. The reply reads :

" . . . The general tendency in broadcasting is increasingly in the direction of public control. A private profit-making control would be a retrogressive step. I cannot therefore agree to sanction the transfer of the (broadcasting station's) Licence"¹³.

The government's intentions regarding state controlled broadcasting were however, reconsidered when one of South Africa's most powerful business interests, the Schlesinger organisation, offered to assume the liabilities of the existing stations. Schlesinger operated the largest chain of cinemas in the Union. The organisation's combined financial strength and strong entertainment industry links persuaded the government that commercial broadcasting although not what it intended was better than bankrupt broadcasting.

A ten-year broadcasting licence was subsequently issued to Schlesinger for his "African Broadcasting Company" and formal control of the Johannesburg station became effective in April, 1927. This was followed shortly by the Cape Town operation and by the end of the year Durban was also part of ABC¹⁴.

Although the ABC drew heavily on its 'entertainment' experience in its programming, it soon faced serious financial problems. The number of listener's licences rose to a mere 15 630 in 1928¹⁵. In spite of the installation of larger transmitters in the major population centres and the construction of additional relay stations throughout the country, the vast distances and the primitive technology of most home receivers resulted in poor reception for many¹⁶.

In 1929 ABC shareholders were enraged when, after three years of no dividends, the company declared a loss of £15 000 for the year. An application for a government subsidy was turned down¹⁷.

During the following year, however, ABC, through a subtle marketing ruse, was highly successful in increasing its number of listeners and thereby improving its revenue position. The company conferred its statutory right to sell radios to those trade dealers who agreed

to issue a 'Blue Free Voucher' with every set sold. The voucher supposedly entitled the purchaser to a free radio licence for a year. In fact the licence was not of course free as the licence fee had merely been added to the price of the set. The scheme had another marketing benefit : not only did ABC obtain their 'licence' revenue but also had a record of purchasers' names and addresses for 'reminder' purposes should they 'forget' to renew their licences¹⁸.

The results of this ploy were impressive by any standards. In 1931 the number of current listener's licences increased by over 9 000 with a further increase of 14 000 in 1932. This fresh injection of capital enabled ABC to install 10-kilowatt transmitters at Cape Town, Grahamstown and Pietermaritzburg as well to improve the quality of programming. Improved programming had, in itself, a dramatic effect on listener response and in 1933 53 670 licences were issued. This figure increased to 73 704 in the next twelve months¹⁹. The ABC had finally arrived as a successful business venture.

In spite of the ABC's success, there existed a great deal of dissatisfaction among Afrikaners in that the service catered almost exclusively to the urban and largely English speaking population of a few large cities,

virtually ignoring the large number of Afrikaners living in rural areas and small towns. Even when the Afrikaner found himself within range of the transmission signal, he was forced to listen, for the most part, to broadcasts in the English language. The Afrikaans language was relegated to a token one hour per week from Johannesburg and Cape Town. This was clearly a situation that could not be tolerated indefinitely²⁰.

The government, too, not unnaturally, was concerned with the deprivation of Afrikaners and to some extent with the profit-seeking motivation of the ABC. For these and other reasons, the Hertzog government decided on a complete review of the now established medium of broadcasting. This review was timely as the ABC's 10-year licence was soon due to expire. As a result, the Postmaster-General was sent to England with the brief of studying BBC operations. Based on his subsequent report, Prime Minister Hertzog invited BBC Director-General Sir John Reith to come to the Union and "look over the situation in this country respecting broadcasting and have conversations with my government as to policy for its future development"²¹. Sir John accepted this invitation and early in 1935 spent six weeks in South Africa before presenting his findings.

Reith's contribution to broadcasting is well recognised.

Many consider his continued striving after the highest moral and intellectual standards in programming to be puritanical. In his view, nothing in the entire history of civilisation could compare with the effectiveness of broadcasting as a means of information, while the speed of its development was greater even than that of printing in past centuries.

He frowned on commercialism on the air :

"Broadcasting is something *sui generis* - unique; and among the things it does not need is . . . pushing of one's wares or ideas, which is a fundamental mistake (or misbehaviour) of irresponsible small proprietors or large propagandist organisations, governments included . . . A conscious social purpose . . . should be given to the exploitation of the medium. The stewardship will be judged in terms, not only of the contentment of the community, but of its responsibility and of its intellectual and ethical standards."²²

The Reith Report released in March, 1935, stated that no serious attempt had been made to plan for national coverage and that the objective of any new corporation should be to cover the country as completely as possible. Reith realised, however, that this service must be

extended gradually since reception conditions in South Africa were "difficult". To remedy this situation, he recommended a greatly expanded system of telephone relay lines and the setting up of a system of regional headquarters as well as a co-ordinating national headquarters. A short-wave receiving station should also be erected, he felt, in order that special events from other countries could be reliably relayed to South African listeners²³.

Though praising the ABC's achievements, Sir John advanced the opinion that the service could be immensely improved. He advocated a state-controlled system since it was felt that no commercial company, in search of profits, could be expected to provide truly comprehensive programmes or to reduce listener's licence fees to a point which would make broadcasting available to the great majority of the populace.

Reith stressed that, even though state-controlled, any new corporation must be free from governmental or political interference. Thus, he suggested that a corporation be created by statute and that the Postmaster-General should grant it a licence. Policy was to be supervised by the Governor-General-in-Council rather than by any one Minister while the Postmaster-General would oversee technical operations. Sir John predicted

that such a division of authority would secure greater public support than if the Corporation was to be made the tool of a single department. The Governor-General would appoint the first Board of the Corporation and these six or seven members should ultimately come to have total responsibility vested in them²⁴. (See also Chapter 9, Section 9.2, for reference to Reith's influence on British broadcasting.)

An important recommendation from Sir John was that regional presentations be proportioned between the Afrikaans and English languages "as . . . circumstances warranted". He also expressed the hope that an advisory committee for school broadcasting could be formed since "broadcasting is the royal road to enlightenment and responsibility"²⁵. This meant that broadcasts "for the natives" were to be encouraged and, since few of them could afford receivers, Reith suggested that the government set up radio sets at trading stores and missions where the "natives" could gather to listen²⁶.

Reith's Report on Broadcasting Policy and Development had considerable impact and on March 25, 1935, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, C.F. Clarkson, announced that the government intended to adopt Sir John's proposals and the enabling legislation would be introduced at the next Parliamentary session. Tribute was paid to the Schlesinger organisation for "having shown the greatest public spirit" but at the same time it was

announced that the ABC's licences would not be renewed upon their March 1937 expiration dates²⁷.

Mr Clarkson said that because broadcasting had become so integral a part of the citizens' lives, the government was now compelled to recognise its responsibilities in the matter. Broadcasting in South Africa should follow the lead of systems in most other countries and be placed under the ownership of the public in whose interests it existed²⁸.

The Bill became Act No. 22 of 1936, a piece of legislation which resembled in many respects the ideas, ideals and conditions of the BBC Charter²⁹. In addition to the nine-member Board of Governors, the so-called "Broadcast Act" also provided for the appointment of local councils at Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Grahamstown, Durban and Pietermaritzburg to advise the Governors on matters connected with the broadcasting service. The new Corporation was empowered to issue stock or debentures with a 6 percent annual interest rate in order to finance acquisitions of the ABC's assets and was given the authority, pending approval of the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, to set listener licence fees³⁰.

Thus, on August 1, 1936, the African Broadcasting Company was officially dissolved in favour of the new

South African Broadcasting Corporation. Drastic changes in the Union's broadcasting were not expected and it was felt the most pressing task was to tactfully initiate the "fifty-fifty policy in relation to the use of the Afrikaans and English languages"³¹.

Because there were insufficient funds to establish separate Afrikaans and English services, an attempt was made for the existing service to become bilingual by alternating programme announcements in English and Afrikaans. This proved intensely irritating to listeners and it was therefore decided, after much deliberation, to retain English as the sole language of the existing service while constructing at least a temporary system to serve the needs of the Afrikaans speaking population. This temporary expedient was achieved by hiring two short-wave transmitters. As the bulk of Afrikaans speakers lived outside the range of the established AM transmitters in the cities, they were accustomed and equipped to benefit from short-wave broadcasting³².

The first complete Afrikaans transmission was broadcast from Cape Town on October 25, 1937, with Johannesburg following with a similar service on December 1³³.

In 1938, in remembrance of the Great Trek, which had

taken place 100 years earlier, the SABC broadcast stages during the four month re-enactment. Naturally, a great deal of Afrikaner interest was created and this one event probably did more to make Afrikaners radio-conscious than anything else³⁴.

It was not long before broadcasting and politics were being discussed. On September 21, 1938, Mr W.B. Madeley, the former Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, suggested that Parliamentary proceedings should be broadcast. He argued that this practice was working well in New Zealand and that it would protect the South African public from the "garbled reports found in the press". Replying, Mr F.C. Erasmus, the Nationalist member, stated that in his opinion the best practice was to keep radio completely out of politics and he used the occasion to criticise the SABC for allowing the Minister of Finance (a member of the United Party) to broadcast a budget message. Mr Erasmus complained that such a broadcast could not do otherwise but represent the Minister's Government and Party in a favourable light and therefore constituted Party politics. Attempting to arbitrate, Mr Clarkson, the current Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, explained that the abbreviated budget report had been broadcast only because of the tremendous public interest in it. He suggested that if the Opposition cared to make a reply or recommendation he

would be glad to submit it to the SABC Board of Governors since this body was taking scrupulous care to keep Party propaganda out of broadcasting³⁵.

Dissatisfaction simmered however, and on February 7, 1939, Dr P.J. van Nierop rose to complain about the "political statements and speeches of British statesmen" which the SABC was broadcasting from time to time. He asked if similar exposure was being given to South African statesmen. Mr Clarkson replied that these broadcasts were often necessary because of their "intrinsic international importance". Statements by leaders of other nations were also broadcast, but due to language barriers these were translated in summarised form. Pronouncements by "domestic politicians" were, on the other hand, largely vehicles of local and partisan interest and broadcasting of these would inject an element of Party propaganda which the SABC Board of Governors, who after all make policy, sought to avoid³⁶.

Soon after this, politics sparked off another controversy, this time within the ranks of the SABC's staff where allegations of "disaffection and insubordination" prompted the Board of Governors to appoint an investigatory committee. Its findings confirmed that due to intense opposition to United Party rule, a minority of staff

had been lax in carrying out their duties and had improperly expressed opinions about the political content of certain items broadcast. Specifically, Afrikaans speaking announcers claimed that their reading of Government statements was distasteful to them and prejudicial to their future.

As a result, the Governors engaged "special announcers" to present the statements so that listeners could easily distinguish such announcements from normal programming. But the Board also made it clear that each member of the "reorganised" staff would be required to sign a loyalty oath to the Corporation "and to its avowed object of fully co-operating with the Government and giving it every assistance"³⁷.

From incidents like these and others it was hardly surprising that Afrikaner resentment flourished. The SABC's Afrikaans service was a very poor relation to its English counterpart. Although AM transmitters had been added to complement the work of the two hired short-wave units serving Afrikaans speakers, there was no comparison in terms of quantity and quality with English service facilities. The situation was further aggravated in the minds of Afrikaners by the completion of the impressive receiving station at Panorama near Johannesburg, which enabled the SABC to relay even more

BBC material to South African listeners. Panorama was to serve South Africa well, however, monitoring Allied and Axis broadcasts throughout the War, gathering valuable intelligence and acting as a listening post for the entire country³⁸.

The War caused many more Afrikaners to move to the cities in search of the increasing numbers of industrial jobs, bringing with it increased demand for more medium-wave (AM) Afrikaans stations. However, due to the War effort and other priorities, the SABC's planned development was severely inhibited. Even so, some programme advances were initiated. For example, in 1940 what was eventually to become Radio Bantu began a fifteen minute daily broadcast in Xhosa. Additional news programmes and personal messages from South African servicemen and new entertainment programmes filled out the programme schedules. Prime Minister Smuts used the Corporation's facilities to inform and rally the people to a cause unpopular with many of them. He used the radio as a recruiting vehicle for the South African Army which had suffered heavy losses at Tobruk³⁹. (There was no conscription in the Union due to intense Afrikaner opposition to fighting a war on the side of the British.) The SABC, in its turn, released for duty scores of employees who volunteered for service. The departure of the largely English speaking volunteers

had the effect, according to Orlik⁴⁰, of further polarising the two groups of SABC staff :

"Although no one liked to admit or talk about it, there was very close to the surface antagonism between Afrikaans and English and a definite belligerence on the part of the Afrikaans speaking group, engendered by a so-called inferiority complex. The English speaking section (rather stupidly condescending at times) blandly ignored the situation but gradually key administrative posts were filled by Afrikaans speaking and/or sympathetic individuals. It should be remembered that the Smuts Government during the War contained many Afrikaners and that there was a strong dedicated anti-British group which openly supported Hitler and Fascism . . . And although Smuts and his friends almost by sheer personality persuaded most Afrikaners that their prosperity lay with Britain and her Allies, they still hated England and very carefully prepared for the time when they could, with advantage break away. So that while almost all English speaking people innocently stood by, the ground was thoroughly prepared for an Afrikaner take-over in broadcasting."⁴¹

The Nationalist Party's continued refusal to support the Allied cause led to a great deal of ill-feeling

among those South Africans (largely English speaking) who had friends or relatives in the services. Some of this ill-feeling found an outlet in the clandestine "Freedom Radio" whose one-hour evening transmissions attacked the Nationalist opponents of the War⁴².

With the growing antagonism between English and Afrikaans speakers within the government and the SABC being fanned by the clandestine Freedom Radio, it was decided that all candidates in the 1943 general election would be excluded from making appeals to voters over SABC radio. German's Zeesen Radio quickly exploited this opportunity with its blatantly pro-Nationalist broadcasts. The voice for these broadcasts was Erich Holm, a citizen of the Union who came to be known as South Africa's Lord Haw-Haw. Operating with the assistance of nearly flawless intelligence, Holm was able to comment on the movements of South African troopships within 24 hours of their sailing and detailed files of military documents, allegedly relayed by sympathetic Nationalists were found in the Berlin Foreign Office at the War's termination⁴³.

With the end of the War, the SABC tried to pursue its earlier objectives particularly in regard to upgrading the Afrikaans service. However, the badly needed new equipment was either unobtainable, or prohibitively

priced, added to which was the fact that the English Service's equipment and transmitters were inadequate to cope with interference problems created by the growth of industrial development during the War years. It soon became apparent that the SABC would need an injection of new capital if it was to fulfil its obligations.

In 1946, with the Corporation under extreme pressure caused by rising costs and the enormous task ahead, the then Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Mr J.W. Mushet, raised the subject of commercial broadcasting. He revealed that there had been numerous requests for commercial broadcasting licences and admitted that the large profits which commercial radio might well provide would be a tremendous asset to a corporation plagued for a decade by a shortage of funds. Any commercial system would ultimately be controlled by the government, Mr Mushet hastened to add, since, as in New Zealand, such control would promote a higher standard of broadcasting⁴⁴.

The SABC then began researching various commercial systems in operation around the world. Despite some discouraging feedback, the SABC, by the end of 1946, had come to realise that non-commercial radio in South Africa had served to limit the numbers of listeners

due to the relatively feeble entertainment which it offered and the high listener licence fee which was necessary to support it. Thus, firm plans were laid for five AM transmitters which were to radiate commercial broadcasting by 1948. Located in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth, the transmitters were to constitute a completely separate service each having an effective range of approximately one hundred miles⁴⁵.

The construction of the commercial service ran into technical and financial difficulties and by 1948 the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs had to reaffirm that the plan was still being implemented⁴⁶. Work had been proceeding in order to meet previous commitments to the other services and it was decided to equip every existing AM station with triple transmitter banks so that each could radiate all three services. Through this revised plan, SABC engineers were able to order and install the new Afrikaans Service equipment at the same time as that which was to carry the commercial service. Provision was also made for new buildings, studios, and high-capacity landlines and by the beginning of 1949 the Corporation's twenty-one transmitters were each broadcasting an average of 98 hours per week, with initiation of the commercial service on a nationwide basis planned for the following year⁴⁷.

Springbok Radio, the name chosen for the new commercial service, went on the air on May 1, 1950, after four years of delay. Yet it too, even though its format favoured entertainment, became involved in the continuing socio-economic power struggle. Most of Springbok Radio's advertising came from the overwhelmingly English speaking business sector and this, in the eyes of its critics, made it more English in character. The Afrikaner press accused the new station of exposing Afrikaners to blasts of 'foreign' influence in their homes⁵¹.

The English language press was also hostile to Springbok Radio as it viewed the station as an unwanted competitor for advertising. This fear was short-lived, however, for the English press soon found that in South Africa, as in other countries, commercial broadcasting helped to stimulate advertising in other media as well as providing for itself. Before long, according to Roos, the only charge that the English press and the English business community could level at Springbok Radio was its lack of sufficient time to meet the demands of advertisers⁵². It is interesting to note that this same charge is now being made today against the SABC's commercial television services.

A new network of high-fidelity landlines enabled

Springbok Radio to reach the regional transmitters and these same lines permitted integration of the other two services on a national level, with Johannesburg being the production centre.

On July 22, 1952, the SABC inaugurated a special 16-hour 're-diffusion' service for the Blacks of Orlando Township near Johannesburg. The system consisted of a series of loudspeakers receiving programmes from the SABC in Johannesburg. About two-thirds of this material was presented in the African languages, having been prepared by Black employees of the Corporation. The immense popularity of the system soon prompted its extension to other townships⁵³.

Having no sooner adopted this new programme policy in relation to the Bantu, the Board of Governors was suddenly faced with the task of reviewing old programme policy in relation to political broadcasting. The proximity and importance of the 1953 general election had once again raised this controversial issue. After numerous discussions with the major political parties, the SABC Governors decided that, as an experiment, radio would be allowed to carry partisan appeals to the people during the course of the 1953 campaign. The government and opposition were each allocated eleven quarter-hour periods with one additional period to follow the voting.

Both the English and Afrikaans services carried the presentations.

Ultimately, it was the Nationalists who seemed to benefit most by the plan, since their speakers, all of whom were cabinet ministers, clearly demonstrated their superior bilingualism.

This proved disastrous for the United Party, since it appeared to confirm the Nationalist stereotype of the English speaking as predominantly unilingual, a serious handicap in a country which is 70 percent bilingual, and amongst Nationalist Afrikaners who had, according to Orlik, an almost fanatical feeling of devotion to their language.

As a result of the elections, the Nationalists greatly increased their parliamentary majority and, though there can be no precise estimate of the contribution of the broadcasts to the government's victory, it can be concluded that South Africa's radio speeches of 1953, like the American television debates of 1960, were in Orlik's words "more bane than boon" for the losing side⁵⁴.

Even so, radio still had a long way to go before an adequate service was provided for all South Africans. The large short-wave facility under construction at

Paradys, near Bloemfontein, expected to extend coverage throughout the interior even though the signal quality would be poor.

SABC engineers knew that the Paradys facility brought an end to further expansion of domestic AM or short-wave services due to a lack of spectrum space. Any future developments would have to use the FM (frequency modulation) systems⁵⁵. However, financial and technological factors prevented any such development during the 1950's.

By 1957 fifty-two transmitters with a total output of 352 kilowatts were radiating AM and short-wave signals to all parts of the country. Programmes for the Blacks were also becoming more important with a separate Bantu Service being established to administer the "rediffusion" system. By 1958 this service was piped into 11 910 Bantu homes for sixteen hours a day. Limited to the immediate Johannesburg townships, the SABC impatiently looked forward to the day when the majority of Bantu could be exposed to over-the-air broadcasting⁵⁶.

This opportunity came sooner than expected for, with the accelerated development of transistors, it became apparent to SABC engineers that a low cost portable receiver was now within the reach of not only rural

Whites, but even the Bantu in the non-electrified reserves.

The potential for FM broadcasting development opened up by the transistor set meant that new technical data would be required on network planning. Senior SABC engineering staff visited broadcasting organisations in West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, the SABC had applied to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for spectrum space allocations for FM sound broadcasting in the Union and South West Africa⁵⁷.

After successful field tests, the SABC allocated funds to begin construction of the first of the new FM stations in December, 1960.

Thus, after seven years of relative stagnation, the SABC was now ready for a period of unprecedented expansion. At the beginning of 1960, the Corporation was operating thirteen domestic stations - only one more than in 1953, and the number of programme hours per week had increased from 333 to 364 in that same seven-year period. The impending introduction of an FM network promised to radically alter the situation and it was pointed out that, while the capitalised expenditure for all the Corporation's studios, transmitting

stations and general equipment stood at just over £4 million by the end of 1960, the projected FM network alone was expected to cost three times this figure⁵⁸.

In preparation for its role in FM broadcasting, Radio Bantu too, took the first step in its planned expansion when it was officially inaugurated on June 1, 1960. Special half-hour morning broadcasts for the Bantu were now extended to all regions of the country over the English and Afrikaans services, thereby increasing total time allotted to Bantu programmes to six hours per day⁵⁹. The programmes were broadcast in the language of the prominent Bantu groups in each region and these modest beginnings set the scene for the various separate services to be introduced by Radio Bantu once the FM network was established.

As usual political controversy was never far from the surface. When J.J. Kruger left his job as editor of the Verwoerd-managed Die Transvaler to assume the post of 'cultural advisor' to the SABC, many citizens regarded the appointment as further evidence of Nationalist Party influence shaping SABC programming. Two listeners' organisations were formed : the Listeners' Union in Natal and the Listeners' Protective Society in the Transvaal. The Natal group was the most vocal in its criticism of the Corporation and its complaints centred

around the twin contentions that the SABC was now almost entirely dominated by the Broederbond and that the programme South African Scene, written by Kruger, was nothing more than Nationalist propaganda. The Listeners' Union also charged that Corporation officials who balked at producing pro-Nationalist material were being passed over for promotion⁶⁰.

As the day of the Republic referendum approached the newspapers were filled with letters complaining about alleged SABC bias in news programmes and pro-Republic propaganda broadcast by the Corporation. At the time, United Party M.P. Mr Ray Swart declared :

"The SABC is becoming an organisation to propagate Nationalist Party policy and it is taking no notice of widespread protests by its subscribers."⁶¹

A new element in the conflict was added with the resignation of the Corporation's Director-General, Gideon Roos, scheduled to become effective on May 31, the day South Africa became a republic. Many suspected that his once dominant position with the SABC had, in fact, been whittled away to the point where the Board of Governors and its chairman, rather than the Director-General, held the real power. Mr Roos had held his post for twelve years and, according to The Times, had,

during that time, consistently opposed attempts to turn the SABC programmes into propaganda messages⁶².

The man who held the now powerful position of SABC Board chairman was Dr P.J. Meyer, originally appointed to the Board of Governors "for his strong and out-spoken Nationalist sympathies"⁶³ and to whom Roos had slowly lost control over planning, development, administration, programmes and finance. Former secretary of the Broederbond's Federasie van Kultuurvereniginge (FAK) (the main grouping of Afrikaans cultural organisations), Meyer had appointed Kruger to the 'cultural advisor's' post⁶⁴. It was Meyer also who, like Verwoerd and Vorster, had run foul of the war-time Smuts government through, according to Eyinga, "the blatant exercise of his pro-German view"⁶⁵. Meyer, in addition, was regarded by many as the then Supreme Chief of the entire Broederbond apparatus⁶⁶.

Whatever the political controversy, the impressive FM broadcasting programme continued unabated and on Christmas Day, 1961, the new FM network officially became operational as English, Afrikaans, Springbok Radio, South Sotho and Zulu programmes were radiated from Johannesburg. At the same time, construction was continuing on other FM stations at Pretoria, Rustenburg, Welverdiend, Cape Town and Durban. FM broadcasting for all peoples in all localities was about to be attained⁶⁷.

At about this time and without waiting for the completion of the FM hook-up, 'radio vision' (educational broadcasts with accompanying film strips for in-classroom use) was launched into South African schools - an extremely successful innovation. At the same time, the SABC's School Broadcasting Service, in conjunction with the National Council for Audio-Visual Education, was transmitting a great many bilingual programmes that did not require the utilisation of special film strips or slides. Many of these educational programmes as well as some presentations used in regular English and Afrikaans transmissions soon found their way to all corners of the globe as the SABC formed its own Overseas Transcription Service to freely distribute the best of South African radio to interested foreign stations⁶⁸.

In 1962 Radio Bantu expanded into FM broadcasting and was also able to benefit from a number of youth programmes within the now full-time broadcast schedules of the South Sotho and Zulu services. By July 1962, the Tswana and North Sotho services, originating from the just-completed Pretoria installation, were on the air with similar features. This brought Radio Bantu's total daily broadcast hours to 51 and utilised the talents of over 100 Bantu staff with further expansion imminent as Durban was prepared for FM transmissions for the Zulu in its area⁶⁹.

Unfortunately, while the Corporation was achieving great things in the provision of FM facilities and in improving broadcast services to Blacks, another political controversy had sprung up around J.J. Kruger, the SABC's 'cultural advisor'. Reacting to the increasing number of sabotage incidents which were occurring throughout the Union, he announced that the Corporation felt it was its duty to introduce a new programme, to be called We Present Facts, which would give "correct and authoritative information about all matters of vital interest"⁷⁰.

The nature of these broadcasts infuriated many South Africans and caused The Star to label the SABC "a crude mouthpiece of the extreme Right"⁷¹.

Despite such criticism, the SABC's new broadcast policies were continued and in March, 1963, they finally provoked a parliamentary reaction from the shadow Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Mr Etienne G. Malan, who moved a private member's motion which condemned the government's refusal to supply Parliament with information about the SABC and requested the appointment of a commission to inquire into the policies of the Corporation, especially in reference to news gathering, selection and presentation. Predictably, according to Bunting⁷², Malan's efforts had little effect and the action was quickly

beaten down by the Nationalist majority which, with its overwhelming superiority in numbers, defiantly passed a counter resolution approving of SABC policy⁷³.

Two months later, public attention was once again focused on charges of SABC news slanting. This time, the attack on the Corporation was mounted by a defence attorney who presented to the court a transcript of an SABC newscast which imputed that his clients, six journalists, had incited a demonstration by Indians in order to get themselves arrested.

The magistrate hearing the case, Mr P.J. Vanderspuy, considered the charge against the Corporation important enough to be called to the attention of Johannesburg's Senior Public Prosecutor. Commenting on the broadcast, defence attorney K.W. Stuart concluded : "This is grave contempt of court. It appears to be an attempt by the SABC to conduct a trial by radio."⁷⁴ Charges against all six of Mr Stuart's clients were subsequently dismissed and three of them brought damage claims against the SABC which were later settled out of court, part of the settlement apparently consisting of a broadcast apology by the Corporation⁷⁵.

By 1964 the growth of the FM network was quite remarkable. Fourteen FM stations utilising 65 transmitters

had been put into operation and it was hoped that, by the end of 1967, virtually all of the country would be provided with FM services⁷⁶.

On September 1st two further breakthroughs were achieved as round-the-clock broadcasting and a new commercial FM service were both initiated. The new all-night FM service was named Radio South Africa (not to be confused with the external service of Radio RSA) and featured nearly continuous music and news bulletins. It proved an immediate success⁷⁷.

The daytime commercial FM service, Radio Highveld linked stations in the urbanised Transvaal and parts of the Orange Free State. It joined Springbok Radio in performing what Dr Meyer called "service to the business world"⁷⁸.

During 1964, politics also reared its head on the international scene. In January, Dr Meyer had a part-time BBC correspondent barred from using SABC facilities in the relaying of reports to London. Meyer told the BBC that the action had been taken in reprisal for the "tendentious reporting" in which the correspondent, Anthony Delius, had allegedly been indulging⁷⁹.

In October, nearly thirty African delegations walked

out of an International Telecommunications Union (ITU) meeting in protest over the presence of Portuguese and South African broadcasters. The conference had been called to outline a specific pattern of spectrum utilisation for the African continent. The British representatives were successful in leading a move to prevent South African expulsion but thereafter the African delegates refused to participate in any meaningful discussion when representatives of the Republic were present⁸⁰.

Angered by this and other diplomatic harassment, the SABC, according to Orlik,

" . . . began to launch ever more vitriolic attacks on Black African states in the all-night service's domestic news bulletins. By 1965, these attacks had been broadened to include virtually every prominent adversary or assumed adversary of the Verwoerd government. Thus, the broadcasts raked not only the Organisation of African Unity and the Afro-Asian bloc, but also the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, Dr Martin Luther King, the Ford Foundation, G. Mennen Williams (then US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs), the Christian Institute of South Africa, and the Rand Daily Mail."81

Long critical of the Corporation, the English language

press now hit back even harder. Representative comments delivered by the papers this time included⁸² :

"This tendentious and partisan attitude of the SABC . . . The Government's propaganda machine . . . disgraceful smear tactics . . . an abuse of monopolistic power."

(Rand Daily Mail)

". . . this farrago of isolated quotations and innuendos . . . "

(Cape Times)

". . . tendentious, slanted comments . . .
.. mastery of the smear technique . .
.. sly innuendo . . a national scandal . . . Broederbond propaganda."

(Johannesburg's Sunday Times)

". . . Broederbond-controlled SABC . .
.. continues to follow the example of Dr Goebbels . . . "

(East London's Daily Dispatch)

The SABC's reply came in the Current Affairs programme when it asked :

"Where will they (the English language newspapers) stand and whose side will they take, if the Republic were to be faced with a situation demanding unity of purpose?"

This, Orlik states, proved too much even for The Star which had long ignored the Corporation's pronouncements⁸³. It felt compelled to reply for the sake of "the unsophisticated who may still take the South African Broadcasting Corporation at its face value". The SABC, continued The Star, "has unashamedly become a propaganda arm of the party in power"⁸⁴.

In October Current Affairs criticised Die Burger for its defence of a group of DRC ministers who were under pressure due to their membership of the multi-racial Christian Institute of South Africa. This unprecedented attack on an Afrikaans newspaper with strong Nationalist sympathies, whose first editor, Dr Daniel Malan, had led the Party to victory in 1948, shocked many but others suspected the reason to be that Die Burger did not get on well with Prime Minister Verwoerd, who was chairman of the board of a competing paper⁸⁵.

Orlik states that many citizens and editors held out the hope that the SABC would eventually work itself out of its "persecution complex" and once again conform to its traditional policy of neutrality. These hopes were dashed upon the release of the Corporation's 1965 Annual Report which made it clear that old policy would be brought in line with new practice rather than the other way around⁸⁶ :

"To a neutrality urge which could jeopardise the security and well-considered interests of the country and the people, the Board of Governors conceded nothing more than might be expected from a South African institution occupying the strategic position of the SABC. It (*the Board of Governors**) is firmly convinced that the Corporation is obliged to serve this country and its population groups in spite of limited but vociferous movements serving aims that undermine and ultimately destroy the happiness, prosperity and future of our country."⁸⁷

As Orlik states, "Its position thus made clear, the SABC confidently went about the task of extending its FM network and its influence"⁸⁸.

By the end of 1965 two-thirds of the Republic's population (including all urban dwellers) were served by FM⁸⁹. Twelve full-time services were in operation including the latest addition Radio Good Hope serving the Western Cape. The total number of weekly hours broadcast was now 1 110, a 300 percent increase over 1961. The number of current listener's licences rose to 1 314 384 which covered approximately 2 500 000 radio

*Author's italics

sets, listened to by an estimated audience of 7 000 000.

Radio Bantu constituted an important part of this latest expansion. All the major Bantu linguistic groups were now being served by Radio Bantu, broadcasting a total of 70 hours per day.

By 1966, 47 FM stations were operational providing 77 percent of South Africa's people with quality FM signal coverage and another six facilities near completion promised to increase this percentage even more.

In spite of this impressive progress, the Corporation was still behind its announced schedule and Chairman Meyer was forced to concede that total FM coverage within the Republic would not be implemented until 1970, three years later than originally planned⁹⁰.

Dr Meyer pointed out the tremendous progress that the Corporation had made in its three decades of existence. This was achieved :

" . . . only by growing in the service of the community as a whole and by becoming a vehicle in the service of the rich cultural life of the community concerned . . . Broadcasting in this country has only recently developed into an independent medium of communication along-

side other media,"⁹¹

The events of the past few years had given opposition parties numerous reasons to doubt broadcasting's "developing independence" however, and 1966 was no exception. During the March General Election campaign, Nationalist members of the government, according to Kahn⁹², had little trouble in securing air time while the Opposition had to be content with summarisations of United Party chief, Sir De Villiers Graaff's speeches which were broadcast as news items. The treatment so angered the UP leader that, in August, he included a pointed reference to the SABC during his attempt to have a censure motion passed against the government⁹³ :

"We all know that it is a state-protected monopoly. We all know that we have to pay licences to Radio South Africa, and that it is presenting news and comments and points of view and that it is doing it almost to the exclusion of others. We know that the Prime Minister said that its function is to correct what he regards as misinformation from certain newspapers in South Africa. While he regards it as that, yet Radio South Africa regards itself as being above the Press Code. It can attack individuals or newspapers or institutions or societies or organisations. It is not called upon to give those individuals, societies or

organisations the right to reply over the radio to the attacks upon them. Sir, is that democratic? Is that in accordance with the best principles? Would any newspaper be allowed to do that? No, they would immediately be reported to the Press Board of Reference, and they would be reprimanded by that Board and they might find themselves in trouble. Various individuals and organisations can testify to the manner in which the appeals to be heard in their own defence have been treated by Radio South Africa, the contempt with which they have been treated. There are various dignitaries of the Church and there are various individuals, newspapers and institutions of different kinds. When a state-protected institution virtually enjoying a State monopoly is entitled to act in this way, then it seems to me that it is taking or is being allowed to take totalitarian power. It is being allowed to deny the fundamental tenets of democracy. It is being allowed to make serious inroads into the rights and freedoms of the individual."⁹⁴

After listening to Sir De Villiers' speech, the Nationalist majority voted down the censure motion and actually introduced a new Radio Amendment Bill, making it an imprisonable offence to supply broadcast material to

any radio station in the world which had been "designated" by the Postmaster-General. Any foreign station could be placed on the list if it was held that its intent was to "disturb the peace, order, or public safety in the Republic, or may prejudice any industry or undertaking in the Republic"⁹⁵.

When objections to the Bill were raised by members of the public and press, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Albert Hertzog, charged that the Reuters office in London was hiring Communists to select the news to be transmitted to South Africa and stated that the English language press had no right to object to anything since it was continuously trying to bring Afrikaners into disrepute and had thus set the stage for the Verwoerd assassination⁹⁶.

By 1968 listener surveys indicated a daily listenership of over two million Bantu. The seven programme services catering specifically for Blacks received more than six million letters during the year. By the end of 1968 there were 54 completed FM stations in the Republic. Licence fees contributed over R8½ million to revenue, while advertising accounted for just over R5½ million⁹⁷.

3.2 TELEVISION'S TROUBLED BEGINNING

It seems ironic that South Africa was one of the last industrial countries in the world to offer its people a television service. It could have been one of the first. Television was successfully demonstrated and enthusiastically received in South Africa as long ago as 1926⁹⁸.

Somehow, the same failure to exploit scientific discovery prevailed as had happened with Edward Jennings, the Port Elizabeth Post Office worker, who invented wireless telegraphy independently of Marconi.

Television, alas, was to remain unattainable for South Africans for another 50 years.

The long tortuous and highly political road that led to the eventual acceptance of a television service has been discussed in the introduction to this dissertation under the heading of Politics and Television.

The first practical step came in December, 1969, when the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs announced that a Commission of Inquiry into Television, consisting of twelve members, under the chairmanship of the Chairman of the Control Board of the SABC, Dr P.J. Meyer,

had been appointed to consider the desirability or otherwise of introducing a television service in South Africa; and to make recommendations on the nature of such a service, should it be introduced.

In defining the terms of reference of the Commission, the Minister stated that the following principles would have to be borne in mind :

- the proposed service would have to be integrated with existing radio services;
- it would have to be statutorily controlled;
- it would have to be fully bilingual and multilingual for the Bantu population;
- it would have to be a cultural service, without usurping the function of the press or of the film and entertainment industries⁹⁹.

Then followed an extensive tour by Dr Meyer on behalf of the Commission to Australia, Japan, the USA, Canada, Brazil and the Argentine where discussions took place with television experts particularly with regard to the management, administration and financial aspects of television¹⁰⁰. No reference is made at this time to contact with British television specialists, but it can be reasonably assumed that television develop-

ments in the United Kingdom were well understood by the SABC at the same time.

In the same year, 1970, the Prime Minister, Mr B.J. Vorster, decided that broadcasting should be the responsibility of the Minister of National Education, reflecting a shift in emphasis away from the 'technical' orientation of Posts and Telegraphs, towards a 'service' orientation, emphasising news, cultural and educational services to the public. the decision was also influenced by

" . . . the ever increasing development of television in other countries serving to emphasise broadcasting as an independent, modern cultural and educational institution"¹⁰¹.

On April 27, 1971, the Minister of National Education, Mr J.P. van der Spuy, announced that the Cabinet had substantially accepted the Report of the Commission of Inquiry and approved in principle the establishment of a statutorily controlled television service for South Africa, with the SABC responsible for the establishment and furtherance of the service. This announcement presented the Corporation with the greatest challenge in all of its thirty-five years of existence¹⁰².

A paper was drawn up in which all aspects of the proposed service, as recommended by the Commission of Inquiry, were set out. This document was circulated to thirty-two experts, foreign and local, inviting suggestions for the planning of the service. This action was to serve as the basis for forming a team of specialists to take charge of the new venture¹⁰³.

In describing the Corporation's activities in the 1972 Annual Report, Dr Meyer said :

" . . . the introduction of a colour television service in South Africa in Afrikaans, English and Bantu languages, is an undertaking the scope and value of which will gradually become clearer. It is a task comparable in importance to any assumed by any other state corporation. The introduction of a television service by the SABC as a statutorily autonomous government corporation will not only bring a new cultural and educational force of inestimable value to bear for the benefit of this country in the years to come, but it will also greatly help to stimulate the national economy, particularly in the future development of the electronics industry . . . Television is fundamentally and essentially an educational medium. It is a necessary service

that no modern society can dispense with,
without spiritual and mental harm." ¹⁰⁴

Few media commentators would disagree with Dr Meyer's sentiments, although many would see the irony in the circumstances when they ponder the length of time it took for South Africa's political leaders and the SABC to reach this conclusion, resulting in South Africa entering the era of television a quarter of a century behind most of the world's industrialised countries and many years after most major countries on the African continent.

During 1974 the Minister of National Education announced that the licence fee for the forthcoming television service would be R36 per annum and selected advertising spots would be approved for broadcasting from January, 1978, approximately two years after the start of the service.

Approval was also granted for the initiation of a television service for Blacks, as Phase 2. This service would be permitted to carry advertising from its inception. Test transmissions for Phase 1 were scheduled to begin in 1975 ¹⁰⁵.

By 1975 the gross total revenue from radio advertising

was R28 455 148, and represented the Corporation's largest single source of revenue and a percentage increase over 1974 of 20,9 percent.

After the nationalisation of all radio services in Mocambique in October, 1975, the Corporation seized the opportunity of replacing the popular Lorenzo Marques Radio with a new station wholly controlled by the SABC, under the name of Radio 5. This meant that all revenue derived from Radio 5 would accrue to the SABC, whereas the revenue of LM Radio was shared with the Radio Clube de Mocambique.

A new department, SABC Enterprises was created in 1975 with responsibilities for finding and marketing commercial applications for a variety of SABC activities, thereby generating additional revenue¹⁰⁶.

Television became a reality for South Africa on January 5th, 1976, with the introduction of the dual Afrikaans/English channel. According to the SABC

"presenting the talents, cultures and points of view of the English and Afrikaans speaking on one channel contributed to a better understanding between the two language groups"¹⁰⁷.

Radio advertising revenue for 1976 was R27 553 990 after

deducting agency commission. The R36 television licence fee boosted revenue from licences (radio and television combined) to R43 428 688 after allowing for collection expenses, thus temporarily reversing the recently established trend of advertising revenue exceeding all other forms of income. Total income for the year (all sources) amounted to approximately R89,3 million¹⁰⁸.

Television commercials appeared from January, 1978 as scheduled. High artistic and production standards had been met and it was generally agreed that the television advertisements compared favourably with those of countries with long established commercial television services. Indeed a number of South African commercials won international awards at Cannes in June, 1978¹⁰⁹.

The gross total revenue from advertising income in 1978, the first year of commercial television, was R73 373 652; of this R38 946 703 was derived from television. In spite of competition for advertising from the new more dynamic medium of television, the radio services maintained their advertising income¹¹⁰.

During 1979 the demand for television time continued to exceed supply. The SABC had to resort to a system of allocation as the best means of apportioning the

available time to prospective advertisers.

An increase in advertising time of 0,75 percent of broadcasting time was granted in October and immediately taken up. After deduction of agency commission, earnings from television advertising alone totalled R46,6 million, making it the biggest single source of income for the corporation¹¹¹.

The introduction of TV2, the channel aimed specifically at South Africa's Blacks, was approved by the government in 1979. The service was scheduled for operation in 1982. Estimated expenditure in capital and establishment costs for TV2 during 1980 and 1981 were R80 million.

It was expected that the 'Black' channel would operate at a considerable loss, incurring an estimated liability of at least R96 million during the first five years of operation. The government undertook to contribute R36 million to these losses to make its introduction possible. The balance is the responsibility of the SABC.

By the end of 1979, the Corporation had reached an important goal with 100 transmitting stations providing virtually all of South Africa with FM radio transmissions¹¹².

3.3 THE SABC - A STATUS REPORT

In April, 1980, Professor W.L. Mouton, a member of the Board of the SABC since March, 1979 was appointed Chairman of the Board, replacing Dr P.J. Meyer, whose term as chairman expired after 22 years of service¹¹³.

The Nationalist press speculated that Professor Mouton's appointment heralded a new dispensation for the SABC, with the Board having more say in the control, management and policy matters than in the past. Critics of the SABC saw the outgoing chairman, Dr Meyer, as extremely *verkrampste** and virtually an autocrat, totally dedicated to the Nationalist line in broadcasting policy.

Professor Mouton, on the other hand, was regarded as being *verligte*** and was believed to be firmly in the Prime Minister's camp.

Speculation on what a new dispensation for the SABC might mean caused The Argus to voice its feelings in an editorial under the heading of 'Good Riddance' :

"Reports of impending reforms at the SABC - most notably the removal of yesterday's men from their Auckland Park thrones - come none too soon.

It was in the days of Dr Verwoerd that the SABC's immense resources were cynically deployed to fulfil the role of propaganda arm of the National Party. And today an old guard still carries on as though hardly anything has changed in South Africa since 1948.

If the advertised reforms restore a political balance to our airwaves we may yet see an end to one of the most scandalous abuses of power in a country that has seen too much of such things." ¹¹⁴

The government also shifted responsibility for the SABC from the Department of Posts and Telecommunications where it had only recently settled (1979), from the Department of National Education. This time the move was to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, under Mr Pik Botha, widely held to be one of the Prime Minister's most faithful allies. The Report of the Steyn Commission of Inquiry observed that the motivation for this last change is unclear and gave rise to a considerable amount of speculation ¹¹⁵.

But even these *verligte* developments were viewed with concern by the Opposition, who feared even stricter government control over the SABC was in the offing.

Dr Alex Boraine, an Opposition spokesman on media matters,

said the move to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information has "an ominous ring" in view of past government attempts to control the media.

"Even if this move is purely an administrative one, it will undoubtedly lead to speculation that the SABC and its television service, linked as they now will be, with the Information service, will become another propaganda vehicle for the government . . . It is counter-productive to South Africa's interests to make this move. The one thing we cannot afford is to have an even more fettered broadcasting system." 116

When the Sunday Times spoke to SABC staff members for their opinions on what the appointment of a new board chairman would mean, it met with scepticism. Naturally preferring to remain anonymous, (SABC staff are prohibited from talking to the press), they said it was unlikely that there would be any change in attitudes unless "there is a clean sweep of top management as well" 117.

". . . If the present Directors-General Dr Jan Schutte, Mr Jan Swanepoel and the Deputy Director-General, Administration, Mr Gert Yssel, who have all survived since the Albert Hertzog era, stay where they are, no-one at the SABC believes there can be any meaningful changes . . ." 118

". . . The new enlightenment of P.W. Botha stops firmly at the door of Auckland Park", said another senior SABC-TV staffman, who had recently resigned. He added,

"The Prime Minister's promising changes haven't even reached this corporation."

He described relations between the SABC executive and their department chiefs as "pure schoolmasterism"¹¹⁹.

Another broadcaster said, "Staff members have been very concerned that none of the Prime Minister's *verligte* policies seem to have been reflected on TV or radio"¹²⁰.

A well known broadcaster, who was about to resign was asked by a Sunday Times reporter what changes staffers would like to see from a new chairman. "We'd like more freedom", he said.

"We'd like to know that thinking people are allowed to think for themselves without, according to our bosses, bringing down the country."¹²¹.

According to the Sunday Times' report, many of the best SABC journalistic staffers had resigned in frustration over the previous twelve months¹²².

It is of course possible that these remarks are typical of disgruntled employees to be found in any large organisation merely voicing their frustration by hitting out at management under the protection of anonymity. However, it is significant that the same dissatisfaction and frustrations were heard as evidence during the Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media. It was acknowledged in the report that the structure and control of the SABC has been the topic of considerable comment and criticism¹²³.

The Commission noted that the Board of the SABC was currently engaged on the comprehensive task of re-assessing all echelons of management from Director-General down. It endorsed Board policy

" . . . of placing the whole management of the SABC on a sound professional footing, at the same time ensuring better lines of communication both upward and downwards, thus rectifying a serious fault that has been identified as one of the weaknesses in the day-to-day operations of the SABC"¹²⁴.

The economic boom resulted in the single channel television service being oversubscribed by potential advertisers by close to 100 percent during 1980. Many advertisers and agencies were up in arms over the meagre

allocations of time, usually only 40 - 50 percent of what they had requested. Grey Phillips, media director Adriaan de Buck, said ". . . general agency and industry reaction is one ranging from outrage to dismay and disappointment"¹²⁵.

Although dissatisfaction was reported to be high, it was thought that many advertisers feared antagonising the SABC by openly criticising allocation policy, for fear of further jeopardising their allocations. At the time, 5,57 percent of total air time was allocated to advertising and the advertisers wanted this increased to nearer the international average of 10 percent. They pointed out that TV2, the Black channel, would be launched in 1983 with 8 percent commercial time from the beginning¹²⁶.

The SABC felt that there was little it could do to increase commercial time, due to the continuous representations by the Newspaper Press Union (NPU) to government, claiming that television advertising is absorbing too large a slice of the overall media cake. The Financial Mail pointed out, however, that newspapers are allowed to buy into television stations overseas. It went on to state :

"Commercial air time should be increased

- a move which would probably take government years to make - or rates should be hiked significantly enough to clear the market, or (probably the best solution) TV broadcasting should be opened to private enterprise"¹²⁷.

Apart from pressure from commercial interests, the SABC continued to be the target of politicians during 1980. In August, Mr Dave Dalling, the PFP spokesman on the media, led a delegation of ten MP's to see the SABC's Board of Governors. Criticism ranged from alleged slanting and selection of news reports and failure to present the other side of the story to actuality programmes failing to touch the surface of reality and ignoring the real issues of the day¹²⁸.

Criticism of the Corporation was by no means restricted to the official Opposition. The extreme right-wing party, the Herstigte Nasional Party (HNP), at its national congress supported with enthusiasm a call for a boycott of SATV, as the Corporation was accused of "bringing Blacks into our living-rooms"¹²⁹.

During a heated debate on the media, HNP members said that 'true Afrikaners' should refuse to take out television and radio licences for this "autocratic

censorship apparatus and lackey of the government".

Delegates rejected the proposed channel for Blacks as "repulsive", as it was financed by White taxpayers¹³⁰.

The announcement that the new Black television channel would attempt to cater for the five major African language groups caused advertisers to conclude that they would have to present their commercials in all five languages. This caused consternation in the advertising industry. Critics of the Corporation were quick to see this as "ideologically motivated and quite ridiculous". The Argus, in an editorial headed 'Tower of Babel' reflected the mood :

"Apart from imposing sky-rocketing costs on itself and its advertisers by enforcing a quintuplication of programmes, the SABC is clearly ignoring what either its viewers or its clients want. Most advertisers believe English is the right medium for a sophisticated Black market. The indications are the likely viewers not only understand the language, but prefer it.

They are likely to resent and resist the corporation's attempt to impose a form of 'mother-tongue' television on them. But it seems the Government simply will not learn."¹³¹

The SABC subsequently denied ruling that commercials must be in the 'language of the broadcast', saying it had been misrepresented by the industry. The Corporation stated that commercials on TV2 could be in any one language in either the Nguni or Sotho language groups. However, the SABC, with its highly successful experience with Radio Bantu, knew it was right to stick to African languages for television. The decision was vindicated two months after the start of the Black service in 1982 by research carried out by the J. Walter Thompson Company which showed quite conclusively that Blacks preferred viewing in African languages¹³².

In spite of the ever-present political wrangling and pressure from the advertising industry, 1980 proved to be another year of achievement for the SABC. Total income increased to R171,5 million, and increase of 12,6 percent over the previous year. Operating expenses (including depreciation and write-offs) amounted to R120,5 million, capital expenditure to R15,5 million and TV2 establishment costs to approximately R6,9 million.

Advertising accounted for over 54 percent of total income, with income from licence fees amounting to just over 37 percent. Of the total advertising income of R93,3 million, R58,5 million or 63 percent was derived

from television (SABC Annual Report, 1980).

On June 28, 1980, a second, independent radio station began beaming programmes and advertising at the lucrative South African market from the soon to be independent state of Bophutatswana. Channel 702 was launched with advertising billings of R1,5 million. Listener and advertising response had, according to managing director Mr Issie Kirsh

" . . . exceeded our expectations and proves a point we made at our launch in Johannesburg - that there was a definite need for a new independent regional radio station in the Transvaal"¹³³.

3.4 THE STEYN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE MASS MEDIA

The most significant media event in 1981 was the publication of the report on the investigation carried out by the Steyn Commission, appointed in June, 1980, to look into the mass media. The Commission's terms of reference were :

"To enquire into and report on the question whether the conduct of and the handling of matters by the mass media meet the needs and interests of the community and demands of the

times, and if not, how they can be improved."¹³⁴

The Leader of the Opposition, Dr Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, had said the inquiry appeared to be "an attempt to begin to harness the press into its (the Government's) total strategy".¹³⁵ He asked if the inquiry was really necessary considering

"the government had a myriad of laws and regulations which enables it to exert almost total control over the press for any specific purpose it wishes to"¹³⁶.

The press, in its hostility to what it saw as an attempt to control and interfere still further into its affairs, tended to lose sight of the fact that the mass media in toto was the subject of the investigation and many newspapers referred erroneously to the inquiry as the Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the 'Press'.

In retrospect, the newspapers were probably correct in their interpretation of the Commission's main task. When the report was not dealing with the "total onslaught" or the "conflict and threat situation facing South Africa" - by far its major emphasis - it singled out the press almost exclusively for the brunt of its criticism and,

in particular, the English language press. Sadly, the opportunity presented for an equally full and comprehensive analysis on the present status of the broadcasting media was missed. The Commission's report dealing with broadcasting appears superficial and disappointing. Only one named SABC executive, Dr J.H.T. Schutte, appears in the annexure listing submissions and witnesses, compared with 25 representing the press.

Assuming the Commission to be genuinely concerned with the future of the mass media in South Africa, it is reasonable to expect a greater spread of informed opinion from the SABC's hierarchy in the report, particularly considering the importance of the electronic media to the country's future.

Mr James Hulett Hopkins, a Natal educationalist, and a member of the Steyn Commission, was also appointed vice-chairman of the SABC Board on the same day as the Commission was announced. Such an appointment must, inevitably, raise questions of impartiality and objectivity.

The author of this dissertation appeared before the Commission suggesting that a working party be set up to examine the viability of an Independent Broadcasting Authority for South Africa¹³⁷ (see Appendix A).

Representatives of the Newspaper Press Union (NPU) in their evidence to the Commission, also presented a case for allowing the press to diversify into independent broadcasting. The South African Society of Marketers took a similar view, expressing concern over the lack of advertising exposure time and the failure of the existing broadcasting services to meet advertising demand.

In its wisdom, the Steyn Commission decided that the time was not yet ripe for independent broadcasting, stating :

"It is not beyond the bounds of possibility, therefore, that the SA Society of Marketers may look beyond our borders to the National States as suitable localities for the establishment of independent commercial TV transmitters, thus draining off a valuable source of income for the SABC. The precedent of Channel 702 and Capital Radio with adequate sponsorship, could be extended to include television, to the embarrassment, financial and otherwise, of our own service.

The Commission, nevertheless, regards the creation of an independent local broadcasting (radio and TV) service, next to the SABC, as undesirable at this stage, mainly owing to the vast demands which the needs and interests of the community make on the economic and manpower resources

of the country, especially in the light of the serious conflict situation now prevailing. *However, this is a matter which merits further consideration by all those concerned at a time when circumstances permit.*"^{138*}

Although the Commission appeared over-cautious, perhaps even negative, when faced with the challenge of independent television, it did place a high premium on autonomy in broadcasting as indicated from the following extract from its report :

"The Commission is strongly of the opinion that the present arrangement whereby the SABC is directly responsible to one of the state departments is not the best arrangement, either for the SABC, or for the community it serves. We have heard a considerable amount of evidence indicating excessive governmental control of broadcasting in the Republic, in news, commentary and general policy. We find that the present arrangement, whereby the SABC falls directly under the control of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information . . . is not in the

*Author's italics

best interests of the community in its widest sphere, and furthermore we find that many of the allegations of governmental control (*it is interesting to note that the Commission did not use the work 'interference'**) are substantiated.

In order to assure the autonomy and impartiality of the SABC, and to refute these charges of governmental control, we recommend that the Corporation be elevated to a status equivalent to that of a 'Crown Office' in the United Kingdom.

The implications of such a move would be that the SABC would not be responsible to any particular Minister or Department. The Chairman of the Board would be responsible directly to the Head of Government (i.e. the Prime Minister) but, at the same time, he would have access to any Minister of his choice for the purpose of consultation and co-operation. Under this arrangement it would be possible, for example, to work directly with the Minister of National Education on matters relating to the use of the electronic media for educational purposes; the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications on technical

*Author's italics

matters; and the Minister of Finance on matters affecting the Treasury, to name but three instances.

All ministers should be mindful of the immense national importance of an institution such as the SABC and their doors should be open at all times to its Chairman.

. . . The Commission is unanimous that, at all costs, the SABC should be permitted to pursue its own destiny, under direction of its Board of Control, within the bounds of national loyalty, impartiality, decency and good taste, and in the broad interest of the SA community, in terms of the Charter to which it owes its origin and continued existence." ¹³⁹

The "broad interests of the South African community" were brought into sharp but contrasting focus by The Argus in an earlier editorial on the Steyn Commission :

"Whatever can be said about the political views of newspapers, they are purveyed by private enterprise and the public is free to ignore them. But the SABC has a monopoly of all broadcasting and is entirely financed by the taxpayer (*an erroneous statement as the Corporation's largest source of income is derived from advertising revenue, but the main point regarding public*

accountability is valid)*.

There is thus cause for deep public concern when a former SABC television producer, Mr Kevin Harris, tells the Steyn Commission under oath, that the National Party and the Broederbond have a stranglehold on the country's broadcasting services. The Commission should probe his charges expeditiously and thoroughly."¹⁴⁰

Whether the Commission complied with this suggestion is open to conjecture, but a significant paragraph in the report appears under the heading 'SABC and Politics' :

"The SABC should guard against being manipulated by pressure groups in society (e.g. political parties, churches, cultural or sporting bodies, etc.), for their own particular motives. An autonomous organisation, professing to serve the overall interests of the whole community, cannot, and must not, become the mouthpiece of a sectional group."¹⁴¹

The Report of the Steyn Commission of Inquiry and its recommendations concerning the press was widely condemned

by both the English and Afrikaans press. Typical of the depth of criticism from both South African and a number of influential overseas newspapers was the following from Mr Ken Owen, at the time newly appointed editor of the Sunday Times, but writing in the Cape Times :

"Steyn Report a 'sorry document'

The Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media has performed the extraordinary feat of devising an instrument of press control too crude even for the taste of a Nationalist government that has long sought to force newspapers to lie by omission.

Its report tabled in Parliament last week is sloppy, shallow, unbalanced, frequently ignorant and dangerous.

It has been deservedly brushed aside by the Prime Minister and summarily condemned by newspapers, editors and publishers, English and Afrikaans. The harm it has caused abroad to South Africa is considerable.

The essence of the report is not freedom of expression. The key to understanding this sorry document was explained during the week by the government's own mouthpiece, Beeld :

'The essence of the voluminous report

of the Steyn Commission on the mass media is that state security in South Africa is threatened by a Marxist-inspired onslaught.' Hence, according to a headline in the same newspaper, the press must be *vasgevat* (tightly grasped) . . . "142

The bulk of criticism, as expected, came from the press and centred around the Commission's proposals on compulsory registration of South African journalists, the general view being that such proposals would signal the end of press freedom in South Africa.

In addition to the above proposal for a statutory roll of journalists, the other key points of the report were :

- A council for the mass media to control the enrolment of journalists.
- The government to appoint the first council.
- The council subsequently to have three members each elected by journalists on newspapers, magazines and from the SABC, with three government-appointed members.
- Only enrolled journalists may be employed by newspapers or other organisations.
- The existing Press Council to be disbanded.

- Individual shareholders in newspaper companies to be limited to one percent of the share capital (10 percent for private companies).
- Crossholdings of shares between companies such as the Argus group and SAAN to be prohibited.
- The government's information branch to be reconstituted independently from the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- The SABC's status to be elevated and its autonomy furthered¹⁴³.

Mr Joel Mervis, official observer in South Africa of the International Press Institute and a former editor of the Sunday Times, described the proposals relating to the press as "grotesque" :

"Grotesque! And totally irreconcilable with the concept of a free press! . . .
 . . . The gulf between Steyn-style censorship on the one hand, and press freedom on the other, is just about as wide as the gulf which separates the philosophies of Pravda and Izvestia from the ideas of Thomas Jefferson.

The Steyn report stands exposed now as a monumental jumble of contradictions, arbitrary assumptions, ideological quibbles and - above all - gross misconceptions of the meaning and function

of a free press . . . "144

A major criticism of the Steyn Commission Report was its failure to grasp a unique opportunity for improving South Africa's mass communications infrastructure by making bold, imaginative proposals for the future of broadcasting.

The rather superficial analysis and recommendations concerning this most vital area were regarded as disappointing by many media commentators.

The Commission appeared to them to have become bogged down with the "conflict and threat" situation and as a result, broadcasting did not get the attention it deserved. This was thought to be all the more regrettable when seen alongside the rest of the western world's initiatives in exploiting the communication explosion via the new technologies of broadcasting. These new developments are explored in Chapter 7 of this dissertation : Evolution, Innovation and New Technology.

The SABC is said by its chairman, Professor Mouton, to be watching these developments with interest, particularly the use of domestic satellites for communication purposes¹⁴⁵.

Critics of the Steyn Commission Report were offered one small ray of light in the Commission's recommendation that the SABC should have greater autonomy, a recommendation in keeping with developments throughout the western world where the trend is not only towards greater autonomy but also to pluralism in broadcasting (see Chapter 9 : Aspects of Overseas Television Systems of Possible Relevance to South Africa).

The Steyn Commission's timid and rather negative approach to pluralism in broadcasting as evidenced in its report, was the subject of a proposed radio discussion in which Mr Nigel Murphy of the SABC's Cape Town office interviewed the author of this dissertation. The taped discussion was sent to the corporation's head office for approval, for possible inclusion in the popular morning programme Radio Today, where it was envisaged it would occupy the fifteen minute 'Special Report' slot.

The material was considered topical coming a week after the publication of the Steyn Report. It was not broadcast. An approximate transcript is attached at Appendix B¹⁴⁶ :

Referring to the findings of an opinion poll (carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on behalf of the Steyn Commission of Inquiry, where a sample of 8 282 respondents, representing all races

were polled)¹⁴⁷, the report stated :

" . . . consequently greater objectivity, more obvious independence and less governmental interference are urgently called for in the handling of the most powerful medium".

One of the most salient features of the poll according to the report, was that :

"radio and television consistently project government in a more favourable light than that in which it is perceived by the community"¹⁴⁸.

The Commission, as part of its case for a new status for the SABC, stated that the original legislation giving virtual autonomy to the SABC had been eroded by various amendments and the way had been paved as early as 1952 for more direct ministerial control of the SABC - a move which could adversely affect the corporation's image of objectivity and credibility.

"The legally enshrined limitation on direct interference in the affairs of the SABC, as envisaged in S26 of the 1936 Act, which acted as guarantor of relative autonomy, has been removed and the ambit of the original licence conditions which

were restricted to technical matters relating to the Postmaster-General, have been considerably broadened, creating uneasiness with regard to the ability of the SABC to maintain its autonomy and consequently also its credibility in respect of its internal broadcasting activities."¹⁴⁹

When the Steyn Commission's report was debated in the House of Assembly on February 15, 1982, the official Opposition, the PFP, urged the government to scrap the report as its recommendations "would kill press freedom and strangle democracy".

The PFP was alone in outright condemnation of the report.

The New Republic Party supported some aspects of the report and suggested modifications to others¹⁵⁰.

Mr Harry Schwarz MP, speaking for the Opposition, said monopolies in the media were undesirable but the spread of shareholdings recommended by the Steyn Commission was not the answer and could assist the concentration of power in newspapers. He criticised the commission for only investigating the shareholding of English language newspaper groups and not those of the Afrikaans press groups.

Mr Schwarz also criticised the report for not making any recommendations to end the radio and television monopoly in South Africa, although it had said there should be a greater degree of independence from government.

"If there should be no monopoly in newspapers, there should be no monopoly in radio and television . . . the danger of tame media under the exclusive control of political power elites is only too obvious. If the Steyn Commission had hoped to find answers to the problem of removing monopolies and avoiding them in future, it had failed.

The Commission stressed the need for private sector involvement in conveying an authoritative picture of South Africa but it had excluded the private sector from radio and television . . .

. . . "151

3.5 FUTURE TELEVISION SCENARIOS

In January 1982, South Africa's television service celebrated its sixth birthday. In spite of the criticism regarding its late arrival on the media scene, its frequently bland and uninspiring programme offerings, the paucity of viewing hours and the lack of real

programme choice, there can be no denying its impact on White South African society.

The SABC chose television's sixth birthday to launch its service for Black viewers, TV2/TV3. It is expected that these new ethnic channels will exert an equally powerful cultural impact on Blacks.

Looking at the future of television, Professor Wynand Mouton, chairman of the SABC, emphasises the need for television to serve the community as a whole. He states that more has to be done to provide a service for both the Asian and Coloured communities. He is reported as being particularly concerned with the role that television can play in education. A number of factors point to more energetic use of television in this regard. These include the manpower shortage, the increase in student population in schools and universities and the changing technology of education itself. The recommendations of the De Lange Commission are being looked at in detail¹⁵².

On the question of whether television tends to widen cultural gaps because of its emphasis on ethnicity - for example, by broadcasting to Blacks in their own languages - Professor Mouton observes that this is preferred by viewers. He comments :

"Television should cater for different cultural groups but the programme content tends to bring groups together, even though the language does not. The SABC is very aware of its responsibility in this regard and is continuously reviewing programme content in terms of cultural background."¹⁵³

Professor Mouton adds that "because of policy" there is no likelihood of the English and Afrikaans television programmes ever being separated, as has happened to some extent with radio¹⁵⁴.

TV2 and TV3 divided into two separate 'regional' services in 1983. Viewers on the Reef and in the immediate vicinity now have a choice of three SABC channels : TV1, TV2 or TV3. Viewers in the predominantly Nguni areas of the Cape, Natal and parts of the eastern Transvaal have a choice of tuning to either TV1 or TV2, while those living in the predominantly Sotho areas of the northern and western Transvaal and the Orange Free State have a choice of either TV1 or TV3¹⁵⁵.

It is, however, erroneous to describe the TV2 and TV3 services as 'regional' in the traditional broadcasting sense, as all programmes originate from the Johannesburg studios and are broadcast from the SABC's centralised broadcasting complex at Auckland Park. Their intended

audiences are often fragmented and located considerable distances from Johannesburg.

True regionalism would imply decentralisation and high levels of autonomy. Each station would, as far as economically possible, transmit a truly local flavour in programming and be located in, or near, the community it serves, providing jobs for local people.

According to Mr Pieter Erasmus, head of TV2 programmes, TV2 and TV3 might each eventually have more air time than TV1¹⁵⁶.

"It is quite possible that within the coming decade TV2 and TV3 will be the champions in every respect on the African television scene, including such aspects as studio facilities, personnel numbers, numbers of viewers and total air time."¹⁵⁷

In examining broadcasting objectives, Mr Steve de Villiers, recently retired (1983) Director-General of the SABC, said the introduction of TV2 and TV3 should be seen against the overall purpose of SABC broadcasting policy in

". . . providing edifying and wholesome entertainment balanced by information

and education . . . it should foster good relations between the various peoples of the country and should try to reflect the cultural assets of all the diverse communities"¹⁵⁸.

Mr de Villiers acknowledged that as far as radio services are concerned, these objectives were being met by current SABC programming. The television service must, in his words "pursue similar objectives"¹⁵⁹.

There can be little doubt that radio has been a success story on an impressive scale. Mr de Villiers pointed to the daily listenership in nine languages of nearly 5,5 million people and the average letter receipt of between six and seven million letters a year.

The main challenge facing the Corporation now, according to De Villiers, is to harness the power of television to education - endorsing Professor Mouton's own conviction.

Planned capital development by the SABC over the five years 1982 - 1987 amounts to R250 million. This cost includes the development and splitting of the two Black services, TV2 and TV3, and the extension and improvement of current services¹⁶⁰.

The Corporation's production facilities will be enlarged with new production centres being built in the eastern Cape, Natal and northern Transvaal. A new complex is being developed in Cape Town, while it is planned to further develop Broadcast Centre in Johannesburg¹⁶¹.

In an interview in the Financial Mail in January 1982, Mr Wynaand Harmse, the SABC's director of administration and finance, reported that, although the total annual operating budget of the Corporation was expected to increase by more than 50 percent in 1982, the SABC's financial position remained healthy. This was largely due to revenue generated by advertising on TV1. By contrast, revenue from TV2 and TV3 was expected to be insufficient to meet expenses in the first year, mainly because of the shorter broadcasting hours. He expected the SABC will come to the market within the next two or three years to borrow capital, in order to meet its development targets¹⁶².

Frequent increases in advertising charges, a source of annoyance to advertisers and the Society of Marketers, are justified by the Corporation in terms of its development plans. The SABC emphasises that it endeavours to break even rather than create surpluses. It does, however, as the Financial Mail points out, have the advantage that if it runs into deficits, it

can turn to its advertisers for more revenue and in so doing need not be overconcerned with competition¹⁶³.

On the other hand, some advertisers would like to see a free market policy operate in relation to advertising time, claiming that the SABC is not charging enough for its scarce resource. Grey Killarney's media director Mr Adraan de Buck claims the cost per thousand viewers had increased by only 14 percent over four years and, as a result, smaller advertisers who would not normally consider television in their media scheduling, are becoming attracted to the medium, regardless of whether it is the right choice for them¹⁶⁴.

Many media planners would swiftly refute this statement and its implications that size of advertiser should have anything to do with access to television, generally regarded as the most dynamic and effective advertising medium of all.

The SABC would also, no doubt, take exception to such a statement as it tends to contradict its policy of attempting to attract advertising from a wide spectrum of the South African economy and not just (as generally tends to be the case in practice) the large national and multinational advertisers.

The so-called 'halo' effect long associated with television advertising, whereby additional prestige is automatically conferred on the advertiser by virtue of being seen on a dynamic medium among other successful, well-known companies, is also, no doubt, contributing to the scramble for this extremely scarce resource. Established users of the medium are obliged to helplessly watch their allocations become smaller each year.

This urgent need for increased commercial air time is borne out by industry estimates claiming that TV1 was oversubscribed by a minimum of 100 percent and that TV2/TV3 commercial time could have been oversubscribed by as much as 25 - 40 percent for the second half of 1982¹⁶⁵.

There is growing evidence indicating that advertisers who fail to get the allocations they applied for are not inclined to invest the capital in other media¹⁶⁶.

These developments are naturally a cause for concern to the South African press in particular. The implications for other media are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

By 1983, the SABC had developed into a large diverse broadcasting institution, broadcasting 19 radio services

in 20 languages, with four television services utilising three channels in seven languages (the shared English/Afrikaans TV1 channel counts as two services)¹⁶⁷.

In the SABC Annual Report, 1983, the Corporation reiterated its intention to become more fully involved in the country's education and training needs.

The establishment by the South African Post Office (SAPO) of an experimental videotext system, Beltel, led to the SABC focusing its attention on teletext (a system by means of which coded information is transmitted by television signal) with a variety of possible applications including sub-titling for programming¹⁶⁸.

Considerable time was spent during 1983 investigating the new broadcasting technologies including cable-TV, over-the-air subscription TV (STV), direct broadcasting by satellite (DBS), multipoint distribution services (MDS), using microwave frequencies to increase the number of over-the-air channels¹⁶⁹. (These new technologies are described in Chapter 7 : Evolution, Innovation and New Technology).

The SABC expects to become "actively involved" in satellite technology in the "near future"¹⁷⁰.

SABC revenue totalled R316,4 million, with advertising services, after deducting commission, contributing just over R197 million, or 62 percent. Television advertising, the Corporation's single largest source of income, generated revenue of R141,6 million or 45 percent of total revenue¹⁷¹.

The SABC today is at a crossroad. A policy of consolidation and improvement of existing services has been outlined for the 1980's. Beyond that no clear policy statement has been publicly announced, apart from the fact that the Corporation will be watching developments in broadcasting in other countries with interest.

The Corporation, variously described by its detractors as a monolithic, autocratic institution, has come a long way in its 48 years as a state corporation. It has survived political onslaughts of great intensity and long duration capable, in some countries, of bringing governments down. It has pursued its interpretation of the broadcasting ideals propagated by Sir John Reith, under whose influence the BBC and numerous broadcasting organisations around the world were shaped.

Fiercely pro-South African from the outset, the Corporation has ultra-cautiously picked its way through

the complexities of the South African socio-political scene, appearing to many to have sacrificed its autonomy (Reith's prerequisite for public service broadcasting) to political expediency along the way.

The Steyn Commission of Enquiry into the Mass Media, although woefully inadequate in its coverage of broadcasting, did recognise the importance of restoring a measure of autonomy to the SABC. It is a matter for regret that the Prime Minister has rejected the Steyn Commission's concept of autonomy, preferring to keep the SABC on a reasonably tight rein, under the wing of his Minister of Foreign Affairs.

However, the Broadcasting Amendment Bill providing for, among other things, increasing the membership of the SABC's board from nine to 15, to allow for the inclusion of other races and enabling the Director-General of the Corporation to be appointed by the board, is a promising development for the future of South African broadcasting, and television in particular.

The real challenge on the future of television broadcasting has yet to be faced by the South African government. With the SABC totally committed for the foreseeable future to its programme of consolidation and improvement of existing television services, new

developments in television, e.g. additional channels and regional services, should be encouraged to come from the private sector, a desirable situation in a democracy. The Steyn Commission, disappointingly, chose not to face up to this exciting possibility. Will the government yet heed the inherent logic in the following quote which formed part of the NPU's submission to the Steyn Commission?

"Though the historical reasons are understood, at any rate at the present time (January, 1981), this situation (monopoly) is undesirable and not in the best interests of a democratic order. A better balance, as well as a more competitive relationship for radio-TV, would be achieved by allowing newspapers and other interested groups to acquire rights . . . to commercial radio and TV stations, in competition and for partnership with the SABC."¹⁷²

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PART 2

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TELEVISION BROADCASTING
AND ADVERTISING

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF TELEVISION BROADCASTING

4.1 PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS TELEVISION

The examination of the social implications of television is a prerequisite to any presentation advocating more television for South Africa. It is necessary, and indeed essential, to look beyond the brief South African experience to countries with a much longer involvement with the medium.

In a dissertation of this nature it is not possible to review the whole spectrum of social implications of television broadcasting. It was decided, therefore, to examine those aspects that possibly have the more direct implications for future television developments in South Africa.

Television is evaluated in a 'public service' role and this term, in itself is sometimes regarded as ambiguous. Throughout this dissertation the term "public service broadcasting" is meant to convey broadcasting that has the primary objective of satisfying public needs for information, entertainment and education. It is

generally considered that this objective is best served through a variety and balance of programme offerings. The term also implies catering for the needs of minority audiences by providing television services that are not always judged successful using conventional commercial criteria.

It follows then, that 'public service' television according to this definition, places the 'public interest' above commercial considerations, usually through a broadcasting organisation accountable to the public. Unfortunately, the concept of 'public interest' is even more difficult to define in broadcasting terms as the history of broadcasting shows. Thus, both terms defy precise and universally accepted definition.

In turning to over 30 years of United States' and European television experience, one is immediately confronted by the controversial and complex nature of the problem. Lucid arguments are to be found in profusion, mainly condemning, but occasionally praising television in a social context.

Although the sociologists differ widely in their thinking, there seems to be a measure of agreement among the more recent researchers that the true potential of the medium, in terms of social service, has yet to

be fully explored. Television's dependence on commercial support has tended to result in under-utilisation of its potential to inform and educate. The overemphasis on entertainment associated with commercial television is frequently viewed by the sociologist with concern.

Eric Sevareid, CBS news commentator and frequent writer on television in society, has a point when he says :

" . . . The most conspicuous critics of the medium, of course, are the professional intellectuals . . . whose complaints are addressed to other fastidious intellectuals. They are telling each other what they themselves like and dislike about TV. But they put on a disguise. They pretend that their concern is with the great mass of the people . . . They tempt me to agree with Eric Hoffer who said . . . that 'intellectuals must never be given power because they want people to get down on their knees and learn to love what they really hate and hate what they love' . . . " ¹

Concern with television takes on stronger tones when one examines the now considerable amount of research dealing with the effects of broadcasts containing sex and violence, on young people. Here there appears to be a developing consensus reinforcing a disturbing picture.

Claims that television discourages reading are hard to prove. Considerable evidence exists which supports the contrary. Books serialised on television, both contemporary and classic, have experienced phenomenal sales after TV exposure. Interesting topics on TV often stimulate people into seeking out books for more information and enjoyment.

TV is often pointed to as a destroyer of conversation. However, some sociologists take the view that non-conversing families were non-conversing families before television entered their lives. It can, of course, also be argued that TV programmes themselves generate a great deal of conversation.

It is also claimed that TV debases the purity of language, yet there are millions of people living in slums and remote rural areas who almost never hear good diction except on TV or the radio².

Television became the dominant information medium in America in 1963 and has steadily increased its lead since³. What is interesting from South Africa's point of view, is that Americans now look to television as the primary source of news about the communities they live in, as well as for a great variety of public services. This emphasises the growing social importance of

regional television in large countries with heterogeneous populations, of which South Africa is an example. The conventional television networks in America are under siege from the new technology and its multitude of new viewing options : Satellite and cable TV; over-the-air pay TV broadcasting scrambled signals; teletext; direct-to-home satellite distribution systems and of course the now familiar (even in South Africa) video cassette recorders. Conventional networks will survive but only if, it is thought, they are able to adapt to the popular demand for more 'localism' - the expanded use of television formats which rely upon local and regional news and information. In this way, conventional stations will mark themselves out as different from the suppliers of programmes from remote sources via satellite or cassette⁴.

It is essential, if South African television is to develop into a major industry, providing a high level of public service, that the government examines methods of incorporating 'localism' or at least regionalism into future developments. If it fails to rise to this challenge, and chooses not to follow the lead of other industrial countries, then whole sections of the South African viewing public could be enticed away from what is still a very underdeveloped indigenous resource, to the more polished offerings that could eventually be

The obvious alternative would be to allow private enterprise, with suitable safeguards, to develop a strong regional television network with the emphasis on 'localism' as is happening in America, Australia and Britain, and a number of other countries (see also Chapter 7, Evolution, Innovation and New Technology and Chapter 9, Aspects of Overseas Television Systems of Possible Relevance to Future Developments in South Africa).

A combination of the state corporation SABC and an independent regional television service, would constitute the basis for a rigorous South African television industry, with a good chance of holding its own against future international satellite competition.

A parallel exists in Europe where it is now believed by media commentators that some governments will be persuaded by the threat of foreign satellite broadcasts to liberalise their own broadcasting systems and admit more channels and advertising⁵.

4.1.1 The Influence of Television

In the United States the influence of television is all-pervasive. Watching TV is, for most Americans,

the most frequent activity after work and sleep⁶. Given its pervasive powers, the question that really concerns sociologists, psychologists, etc. is how persuasive is television? In an interesting study by Professor William Stephenson, The Play Theory of Mass Communication⁷, an intellectual framework is created to help explain what the consumer of television is experiencing.

Stephenson says the consumer's life is divided into work and play. Watching television is considered to be a play activity and for this reason it is not something to be taken too seriously. Television is for relaxation and entertainment. But it is not mindless. Newspaper and magazine reading are also seen as leisure-time activities but with a more serious purpose. Stephenson concludes that the programmers of American television have grasped this point, and therefore the need to engage the viewer and hold his attention becomes the bottom-line requirement of all television presentation.

It is possible that some South African programmers are unaware of this theory, or are reluctant to subscribe to it because of its tendency to place all programming in the 'show business' category, whether it is news, documentary or entertainment. Nevertheless, it could perhaps, partially explain the fairly high proportion of indigenous programmes that are dull and predictable

and which fail to meet viewer expectations.

In this connection, it is interesting to compare the polished, professional efforts of the advertisers to those of the programme producers. True, they are in the selling business and fully understand the importance of impact and presentation in a competitive market.

If television is seen from the point of view of its audience in terms of Stephenson's "television-as-play" theory, some seemingly contradictory developments are explained.

Candidates for political office in the United States today increasingly use television to convey 'auras' to the voters rather than policies. Diamond⁸ uses the Ford-Carter presidential campaign to illustrate this point. The strategists concluded that the voters' presidential choice would turn on perception of character, as no major substantive issues appeared to divide the candidates. The question posed to the voters in 1976 was, in effect :

"Who is best able to restore confidence in government and faith in the American way after the terrible events of Watergate, the excesses of the CIA and the FBI, the Vietnam war and the civil

disorders? - what better way to convey aura and a persona than to use television . . . where performers constantly project images and emotions? . . . Not surprisingly then, both Mr Ford and Mr Carter eagerly accepted the offer of the League of Women Voters for a series of presidential 'debates' on television to demonstrate their abilities. . . . The 1976 campaign turned on the stylistic issue of character and television was used to project that character."⁹

Another example of taking the viewers' perception into account can be found in looking at daytime television. This very popular viewing behaviour pattern (not yet fully established in South Africa) is often dismissed in a derisive fashion as 'soap opera', so called because the original programme sponsors were detergent and other consumer goods manufacturers, who targeted their products predominantly at the housewife. The attention of this audience is captured by dramatic serials of family life whose on-going plots emphasised highly dramatic family crises such as adultery, alcoholism, run-away children, pregnancy, abortion or divorce. Diamond considers these programmes as highly politicized material in that they raise the kinds of human issues that people can imagine themselves facing.

South African viewers have experienced some of the same

kind of emotional involvement, albeit in the evening, at peak viewing time, with the imported American programme Dallas and also with the South African production Westgate.

Even in peak viewing evening slots, where the American emphasis is unabashedly on entertainment, Diamond detects a trend towards the more intelligent comedies where very real social issues are handled. Many of these American programmes dealing with sensitive human relationships have since proved extremely popular with South African audiences. In addition to All in the Family and The Mary Tyler Moore Show, quoted as examples of the popular culture by Diamond¹⁰, the more recent Taxi and WRKP in Cincinnati are good examples of comedies which are able to explore human relationships with sensitivity.

4.1.2 Television and Black-White Relations

In examining the influence of television on society, an interesting study with relevance to South Africa was carried out by K.N. Bowmani at Stanford University¹¹. The general purpose of the research was to determine if TV tended to foster, maintain, or close the socio-economic-political (SEP) gaps between Blacks and Whites

in America.

The study was divided into two parts. The first included a project called One Week of Black TV which systematically examined the portrayal of Blacks on prime-time network TV. The second part included a Hollywood case study, based on the popular Black TV programme Good Times which examined the function of TV in relation to the Black community. Both parts of the study used the basic of DCT (domestic colonialism theory). DC was defined as a highly unequal, exploitive relationship imposed and controlled by a dominant group over a subordinate racial or cultural group within a country.

Four basics of Black DC were examined :

- (1) domination or involuntary subordination;
- (2) cultural devaluation;
- (3) colonial administration;
- (4) racism.

A major proposition that Blacks on prime-time network TV tend to be portrayed in subordinate lower-status occupations, was not supported, indicating perhaps that programmers were consciously trying to avoid stereotyping Blacks, rather than reflecting American society as it is. South African programmers are often faced with

the same dilemma which is seldom resolved convincingly, from a viewer's point of view.

Other contentious conclusions reached by Bowmani were :

- (1) TV maintains and probably fosters existing SEP gaps between Blacks and Whites.
- (2) Black DC is fostered by TV's profit-maximising operations as broadcasters claim they have no mechanism besides profits and audience ratings for judging programmes.
- (3) TV tends to provide homogenized, imitative programming that reinforces the DC mentality and status of Blacks.
- (4) Black ownership and employment in TV is colonial, partly because broadcasters do not fulfil their legal obligation to 'serve the public interest, convenience and necessity' (presumably another argument that the profit motive inhibits equal opportunity in the television industry).
- (5) The outlook for TV as a tool for Black decolonisation is not promising (*in the U.S.**) given current SEP conditions.

*Author's italics

Summarising Bowmani's recommendations :

- (1) Researchers should concentrate more of their limited resources on 'macro issues', e.g. the effects of corporate control on TV programming policy.
- (2) Improvements in Black TV portrayals should be matched by concomitant improvements in Black ownership and employment in the TV industry.
- (3) Blacks should have a fair share of control over TV and other aspects of society proportional to the population.
- (4) TV's profit maximising ethic should be dropped and basic changes are needed in the industry's inter-locking financial relationships with big business.
- (5) While being restructured, TV should be simultaneously used to foster Black decolonisation, the elimination of gaps between rich and poor, men and women, etc.

A central pillar of Bowmani's dissertation, namely that the system, or existing TV institutions, militate against decolonisation (in South Africa the term 'equal integration' probably comes nearest in meaning) is

probably overstated. However, the call for industry restructuring has been made before and may well eventually be forced on the industry by SEP pressures and/or the dynamic nature of the new technology. How these recommendations might be achieved, assuming of course that they have the necessary level of American public support, is open to conjecture. Certainly it would require an increase in regulatory instruments at a time when the emphasis is on deregulation of broadcasting.

Nevertheless, the overall findings of Bowmani's research have a possible bearing on the development of television in South Africa. Particularly relevant is the recognition given by the study to television as a powerful force for influencing human behaviour. Indeed, many of the issues raised are currently exercising broadcasters on both the Black and White services of the SABC. Only time will show how successful they have been.

4.1.3 Pressures on 'Offensive' Television Programmes

The American experience provides numerous examples of public concern regarding programme content and there is a history of pressure groups advocating boycotting

of companies sponsoring what are considered to be 'offensive' programmes. It was not so long ago that these pressure groups held considerable power and their influence, to a significant degree, dictated the kind of programme networked across the United States. This led to 'safe' rather bland television fare, non-controversial in content, relatively inoffensive, where fear of upsetting the sponsor (advertiser) and particularly his customers, became a major concern of programme planners. However, bold new developments in programme experimentation began appearing in Britain in the 1960's. These controversial, but highly imaginative new directions were to revolutionise the medium in Britain and, considerably later, in the United States.

The basic ingredient in the new formula was satire. Few individuals, institutions or beliefs were sacrosanct. Cynical observation, the debunking of hypocrisy and ridicule, provided a new creative format which astonished the viewing public and rivetted them to their television screens. South Africans will be interested to learn that this programme innovation began with the BBC which does not carry advertising, so did not have to worry about upsetting sponsors. The BBC is also privileged in that it does not have to conform to the requirements as laid down in the Television Act, enjoying its jealously guarded charter status. The independent (commercial)

television companies in Britain are obliged to conform with the minimum requirements of the Act. They also have to heed, to some extent, the attitudes of the advertisers buying spots in their programmes. For this reason, they can perhaps be compared with their American counterparts when it comes to being sensitive to public reaction to programming. Commercial television per se, has always been suspect in the sociological sense, so the British independent companies have tended to concentrate on professionalism and evolving programmes acceptable to the masses, with the emphasis on entertainment rather than on innovation and its possible controversial consequences.

Two recent examples illustrate the BBC's unique autonomy regarding programme issues. The first is what many consider to be the 'outrageously' satirical comedy series Not the Nine O'Clock News. The second concerns the BBC's stance on its coverage of the Falkland Island crisis. Under severe criticism from Mrs Margaret Thatcher the Prime Minister, leading defence statesmen and many other influential Britons, not to mention large elements of the British public, Mr Richard Francis, head of BBC radio replied :

" . . . It is not the BBC's role to boost British troops' morale or to rally the British people to the flag . . . Our

contribution to the national morale in the present crisis is no more than to provide the most reliable account possible of confusing, worrying events . . . The truth is always the best propaganda."¹²

Needless to say, this second contentious and rather extreme example was siezed upon by sections of the South African press to draw comparisons :

"How incongruously these words fall upon South African ears inured as they are to the biased, politically suspect approach to news which has become the hallmark of the SABC! And how refreshingly independent he (Richard Francis) seems after the obsequiousness which luminaries in our own electronic media display towards the Government . . . "¹³

The American broadcasters' dilemma of whether they should risk alienating the sponsors by pursuing more controversial programming, or maintain the status quo, was solved by the simple expedient of observing the changing needs of the viewing public. Americans began examining the line between democratic self-expression and antidemocratic repression. They grew increasingly dissatisfied with pressure groups attempting to become arbiters of taste and dictators of moral philosophy for the nation. Television itself had changed. The trend was away

from sponsorship of programmes (and consequently programme control) towards the buying of spots in the programmes. The advertisers, although still concerned with where their advertisements appeared in the programming, had less opportunity to dictate programme content, their main concern being with audience size (the ratings).

For all that, pressure groups like the Coalition for Better Broadcasting claiming to represent 300 mostly conservative, anti-abortion and religious groups (including Moral Majority, its largest member and financier, which demonstrated its formidable political influence in the 1980 elections), are taken very seriously indeed by advertisers and broadcasters alike.

Some observers argue that while many of the other pressure groups want to refine and expand certain aspects of television content, the coalition wants to eliminate great chunks of the schedule so the TV product conforms with its views and visions. Moreover, the dominating presence of Moral Majority in its ranks suggests that the overriding concerns are not just social, but political and religious. For many, the spectre of a 'new conformity' is real and chilling¹⁴.

According to John O'Connor, television has had its own history of citizen pressures. Many groups have lobbied

successfully in recent years for better representation on TV : Blacks, Hispanics, women, homosexuals, environmentalists, etc.

In the 1970's the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, a group currently headed by Ralph Nader, regularly and prominently identified advertisers whose spots appeared most frequently in violent programming. No official boycotts of the advertised products were called for, but the strategy clearly involves sensitive matters of degree¹⁵.

The American television industry is resisting such pressures. Programmes, like NBC's Jesus of Nazareth, were broadcast despite opposition from several religious groups. So, too, was CBS's Playing for Time, the story of a Jewish victim of a Nazi concentration camp, starring Vanessa Redgrave, an outspoken advocate of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), in spite of protests from Jewish groups¹⁶.

In Britain, in 1980, ATV's programme Death of a Princess, a dramatised reconstruction of the life and death of a Saudi Arabian princess executed with her lover in 1977 for adultery, sparked off what the Daily Mail referred to as "the biggest row since Suez". The newspaper claimed that the Saudi's were threatening to ban British

exports, cut off diplomatic relations and embargo Britain's oil, if the programme was broadcast¹⁷. ATV went ahead with the broadcast and as far as it is known none of the alleged threats materialised. In retrospect, it would appear that the British press gave the story far more substance than it actually had, but there can be no doubt that the programme did cause a major international incident.

Apart from constant criticism from individuals and some small, relatively unsophisticated groups in the press, South African television has yet to experience organised pressure groups on a large scale. The powerful Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) has consistently opposed the broadcasting of sport on Sundays. However, there appears to be a discernible, albeit unorganised, groundswell advocating that Sunday's television programming should be restructured to cater more for the needs of those viewers seeking to relax with entertainment and sport. The current overemphasis on religious broadcasting is the cause of much dissatisfaction.

It is known that the SABC has been wrestling with the subject of Sunday sport for a considerable time, but so far it has been unable to satisfactorily resolve the problem.

Ian Gray comments that a blanket 'No' to Sunday sports' broadcasting would result in

" . . . a wail of outrage from the Black viewers who have indicated in surveys that sport is their top form of television entertainment - and for Blacks, Sunday is for many reasons the most important viewing day . . .

. . . A blanket 'Yes' would bring forth just as loud a protest from Whites - but from a much smaller section of that population group. It is, as we know from the political front, a tiny but vociferous minority . . . "18.

Hope was given to sports fans by the SABC announcement on May 16, 1982, that the corporation had reserved over four hours of satellite feed time on Sunday, July 4, for the Men's Singles Tennis Championship's Final from Wimbledon. A spokesman said the SABC was trying to obtain the best possible coverage, but the actual Sunday broadcast was not finalised¹⁹.

Significant differences in attitudes to television exist between South Africans and people from other Western countries. Whereas the British, Americans and Australians are, to a large part, firmly addicted to the medium, i.e. it plays a large part in occupying their time, the South African viewer's involvement with

television is relatively slight by comparison.

"A British visitor recently put forward the serious suggestion that the SABC's strength lay in the fact that the bulk of South Africans will never become addicted to television to the extent that overseas viewers have . . . He found it terribly refreshing that most South Africans turn off the TV when visitors arrive and often leave it switched off for nights at a stretch, except perhaps for a brief period of news-watching . . . In Britain, he said, you can switch on early in the evening and, by channel switching, be completely absorbed in your television till the small hours . . . "20

This apparent 'lack of commitment' on behalf of viewers to television widely prevalent in South Africa, will almost certainly change as existing programme offerings improve both in quality and choice, creating a greater dependence on the medium in future generations. However, as there is yet no South African generation that has grown up with television, it is fascinating to explore perceptions of television particularly among educated opinion leaders in South African society (see also Chapter 8, South African Opinion and the Television Debate).

Perhaps typical, in many ways, of those who oppose television is Dr Chris Barnard, the heart transplant pioneer, who recalls how as a young doctor carrying out research in the United States he found television more of an irritant than a relaxant and he was unable to join other hospital staff who, after a fatiguing day, used to fall into an armchair and "let the box massage their cares away"²¹.

Barnard's criticisms of television are not original but nevertheless have a relevance to present South African society. For example, in referring to the new technology, he states :

" . . . Important events will be reduced to trivialities. The first time you see the assassination of an important figure you are horrified. The tenth time you are bored - which to me has more fearful implications for the human race than the sociologists' warning of an increase in the availability of pornographic films . . . " ²²

He is also critical of what he terms the "subtle moulding of behaviour and opinion by the box", indicating that viewers lose a sense of reality :

" . . . In South Africa the mythical headaches faced by a half dozen Ewings

(the central family in the Dallas series) are of more import and get more screen time than the very real heartaches faced by a half million migrant labourers Worse TV destroys your 'now' experience . . . every hour spent watching is an hour less to spend doing People who are fully occupied in active living simply don't have the chronic depressions, vague worries, odd aches and poor digestion of those who merely sit and watch others "23

In judging television to be subtly all-pervasive, he sugars the pill, but only slightly when he states :

" . . . There is some evidence that it acts to make life bearable in situations where it should be unbearable, as in problem-ridden families or an unhappy marriage held together only because the members spend every free hour in front of the box.

Take away the box and the marriage or family, never having time to examine their condition, falls apart

. . . There is also something strange about the view that TV is a blessing for the aged. As my sociologist friend put it : 'How sick we are in thinking that the old are provided for if only we keep them hooked into the drug that comes from the needle of the hypodermic aerial on the roof' "24

Although somewhat cynical, and certainly not typical, Barnard's views on television are reflected to a greater or lesser extent by other South African opinion leaders, as Chapter 8 demonstrates. Educated people often find little to praise and much to criticise.

Newspaper columnist Brian Barrow is typical of those South Africans who fear rather than welcome more television. Hitting out at the 'cable revolution' soon to arrive in Britain, he describes the whole development as "evil and horrifying"²⁵.

Barrow fears that television will eventually regulate the lives of South Africans :

" . . . Already television is becoming a curse . . . a great mind leveller which is slowly and insidiously destroying our capacity for original thought.

. . . It is forcing upon us a centralised uniformity and changing our moral and spiritual lives. I wouldn't be at all surprised if one day . . . people will look back on it as one of the greatest evils ever invented.

There are many people who think that even the good TV programmes are fundamentally bad for us. In fact they might be the most harmful of all because they stunt and cripple the

imaginations of children with visual material from a central source. It is a frightening thought that images fed to us in this manner can stifle all originality . . .

Cable TV is already a reality in the United States, Belgium and West Germany. In Britain the government is considering recommendations to introduce it . . . Let us hope and pray that it never comes to South Africa."²⁶

Barrow's criticism is typical of many South Africans who have comparatively recently seen television enter their lives. It is worth noting however, that similar criticism and emotional reaction greeted the invention of the printing press. The fact that television can serve the community via information, education and entertainment and is a vital component of present day civilisation, tends to escape these critics who apparently sieze only on the abuses and excesses of the medium, often presented by means of questionable research and based largely on emotion.

The debate should ideally centre around the uses to which the medium is put and not on emotional trivia and generalities. Certainly many media researchers and sociologists would strongly disagree with Marshall McLuhan when he states "the media is the message".

Contemporary commentators generally prefer to stress programme quality as being a *sine qua non*, if television is to provide an enjoyable, exciting and socially gratifying service.

Amid the debate as to what television's role should be in society, certain basic requirements are continually stated. It should have mass appeal in informing, educating and entertaining the public. It should provide a forum for free speech and communication, free from interference and its programmes should reflect society's various interpretations of the term "social responsibility". It should avoid becoming an instrument of political propaganda.

The effects of television on society, as previously stated, are the subject of much research, but as yet remain largely unknown. Because the medium is still so young, researchers do not have subjects who have been exposed to it all of their lives. At very best, the oldest subjects for study purposes are only thirty-five years old. The vast majority of people in the world have never even seen a television set as it is doubtful if more than 10% of the world's population have access to television²⁷.

Milton Shulman also shares the view that Marshall

McLuhan was wide of the mark when he implied that the contents of the medium are irrelevant. He quotes Herbert Marcuse's view that television in America indoctrinates and manipulates people to accept the virtues of affluences and the profit motive through entertainment and commercials.

"It thus positively obscures and disguises the contradictions of capitalism and reinforces the system."²⁸

Shulman implies that one does not have to go the whole way in agreeing with Marcuse's social criticism of television to accept his view that programme content is significant in shaping the attitudes of a society²⁹.

4.2 TELEVISION AND YOUTH

It is possible that television is made something of a scapegoat for family difficulties. Dr Bruno Bettelheim, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Chicago and Principal of the University's Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School for disturbed children, claims that parents, in their chronic anxiety to 'do the right thing' in bringing up their children, find it easier to fight television than to fight the problem in themselves³⁰.

Dr Bettelheim recalls that there was a time when smoking was blamed for criminal behaviour, the corruption of youth and other social evils, views which seem ridiculous now. Similar criticism was levelled at the cinema by responsible citizens when it first became popular. He concludes that the same thing seems to be happening to television.

Bettelheim points to the striking contradiction between what people say about television and what they do about it. Few American families today are without at least one set in their homes. Would parents spend their own money to put before their children something that they honestly believe will corrupt them? Hardly, he concludes.

"What seems more accurate is that parents aren't sure. They then feel a little guilty, fearing that their own pleasure in television as entertainment, and their own wish to give their children the same privileges as other children, may have led them into the path of least resistance - to the ultimate harm of their children."³¹

Referring to British research published in 1958, entitled Television and the Child³², he points to the report's conclusion :

" . . . the final picture of the influence of TV on children's interests, knowledge, outlook and values proves to be far less colourful and dramatic than popular opinion is inclined to suppose . . . " ³³

Though the British research doubted the effectiveness of TV in influencing personality, it was felt that the constant display of aggression by both the criminal and the upholder of the law would make an impact on children sensitive to such cues.

Bettelheim argues that the more educated the parent, the greater the gap between his interests and those of a young child, with the exception of certain play activities. Parents not exposed to TV as children (as is the case with the South African adult), are often at a loss to fathom what it means, or may do to their children. Busy parents, craving free time for themselves, realise that letting their children watch television can provide this free time, but it often heightens feelings of guilt and this guilt which is really a manifestation of self dissatisfaction, is projected on to the medium as a whole.

Less educated parents with perhaps fewer demands upon their free time, often watch and enjoy television with their children. They demonstrate few anxieties regarding

the medium, often being happily convinced that television keeps the family together.

The other social source of anxiety explored by Bettelheim arises from the difference between television and the culture of the book. In his opinion, educated parents feel that audiovisual transmission of knowledge is more primitive than the printed word and more lacking in richness. They therefore complain that TV is taking children away from reading. Bettelheim argues that for the vast majority of the populations of the United States and Western Europe this was not a problem

" . . . as children cannot be taken away from a literary culture that was never part of their lives . . . it was exactly those layers of the population who had never embraced the culture of the book - though most were literate - who were delighted with TV, while the more highly educated the group . . . the greater their resistance to TV. Thus while the mass media and most of all TV, have opened much wider horizons to the non-book-readers, highly literate people fear illogically that TV will narrow the non-reader's cultural tradition."³⁴

Psychologically, television has more immediate impact and can capture the imagination, but does not liberate

it, according to Bettelheim. A good book not only stimulates but frees the mind, by involving the reader in personal mental activity, whereas television often leads to mental passivity. Although believing that the book is still of greater refinement as a learning instrument, Bettelheim argues that television also has unique qualities, particularly in terms of impact and information retention and that both have their place in society.

More recent research by Colley in 1977³⁵ confirms instructional television as an effective tool in the educational process, when combined with other aspects of the educational environment, and particularly so when supported by active student involvement.

In Colley's study each of four language arts classes was exposed to a different combination of television and activities. The study used two junior high schools in Oregon. Group One viewed the televised lessons and nothing more. Group Two viewed the televised lessons twice. Group Three viewed the television lessons and did written practices, checking their responses with overhead projections. Group Four viewed the television lessons and had a brief discussion about them.

Analysis of covariance revealed that learning occurred

under all treatments and that Group Three was significantly higher than the average of the other three groups ($P < 0,05$). There was no significant difference in learning among Groups One, Two and Four. The superiority of the Group Three treatment was still evident though slightly diminished after ten days.

This study tends to confirm Bettelheim's theories particularly with regard to television's educational qualities in terms of impact and retention.

Further confirmation is forthcoming by examining research carried out by Storm, 1980³⁶, where young children's learning from selected television programme content (varied subject matter) was determined and a relationship sought between learning and a number of independent variables such as age, level in school, school achievement, average education of adults in the family and amount of prior viewing with an adult. Among the study's conclusions were : the amount of viewing that a child does with adults appears to make a difference to how well he/she understands the content; that children learn more from certain types of television programmes as they get older; that subjects in the study whose adults in the home had more education, were reported to watch less television than others (possibly suggesting that parental example led to greater selectivity

on the part of the child), had fewer siblings, did better in school and learned more from selected television programming, especially programming designed to teach content traditionally taught in elementary schools.

Shulman³⁷ argues that television is now a fifth environmental factor when considering the most important socializing influences in a child's life. He considers it now ranks in importance with the home and parents, the neighbourhood, school and church. None of these factors occupies more of a Western child's waking hours than does the small screen.

Shulman points out that the average viewing figure for American children is four to four and a half hours per day. Since this is an average, many children obviously spend even more hours watching TV. Among the poor and uneducated the figure rises to five to six hours a day. One American statistic testified to the fact that in some slum areas of New York, children between the ages of three and five looked at television eight to ten hours a day. It has been calculated that by the time the average American child has graduated from high school, he will have spent 10 800 hours in school and more than 20 000 hours watching television. It is likely that this figure will soon be matched in Britain³⁸.

In the light of the new technology, whereby satellite and cable television vastly increase viewing options (a development subsequent to the publication of Shulman's book in 1973), these figures are almost certainly on the conservative side.

Shulman's central thesis is that television is being misused by an overabundance of trivial entertainment. He argues that young people may see this triviality as a reflection of society, become revolted by it, by moving violently against it, or by opting out altogether. In his book, The Ravenous Eye³⁹, he examines in some detail the evidence that television might be a serious contributor to the manifestations of violence, rejection of authority, the widening of the generation gap, unprecedented drug taking as a gesture of defiance and escape from straight society. He feels it is disturbingly significant that these forms of antisocial behaviour are particularly prevalent in the United States, Britain and Canada, the only countries (at that stage, 1973) that had raised a generation exposed to television. All of these countries, he points out, have made entertainment the prime consideration in programming.

Over thirty years of researching problems associated with television and children in the United States has brought in strong evidence that parental authority is

being undermined. According to Dr Irving Kaye of the Community Counselling Centre in New York⁴⁰, even the so-called harmless 'family' shows like Eight is Enough and The Tony Randall Show, which depict children as being brighter than their dull, dim-witted parents, are undermining the authority and influence of real-life parents.

Another family expert, Dr Selma Miller, of the American Association of Marriage and Family Counsellors, agrees.

"The TV family has a definite influence on the viewing audience. . . . Parents and children tend to imitate, or at least think about imitating the relationships they watch on TV."⁴¹

Dr Diane Schmukler, a development psychologist at the University of the Witwatersrand, specialising in research into the effects of television on children, comments :

"In general, South Africa has a relatively benign TV service. . . . but I do feel that it is harmful for children and parents to see family dramas and conflicts reach a 'happily ever after' conclusion in only 30 minutes, when of course, real-life is not like that at all."⁴²

Dr Schmukler recognises television as a medium capable of exciting strong social influence. She believes

certain morality issues played out on television are possibly harmful to teenagers who, she considers, could well interpret these situations as normal behaviour⁴³.

Even the much acclaimed educational television programme Sesame Street (not seen by South African viewers) which is constantly re-screened in America and forty other countries, comes in for heavy criticism from two American researchers, Dr Jerome and Dr Dorothy Singer, who run the Yale Family Television Research and Consultation Service, who claim the programme is turning out a generation of badly behaved and unteachable children :

"The programme creates children who can read letters and recite numbers . . . that's what parents love about it . . . But that's all it's doing. It isn't preparing kids to learn or play well after the TV set is switched off . . . Children are led to expect the same pace in life - sometimes even demanding it."⁴⁴

One of the results is that nursery school teachers cannot hold the attention of a kindergarten class for more than two or three minutes - the time of an average Sesame Street segment. South Africa's TV 1 English language children's programme organiser, John Howard, is aware of the findings on programmes like Sesame

Street and agrees that they can over-stimulate the child and cause anxiety because they move so quickly.

"That's why we prefer to screen programmes like Liewe Heksie and Paddington Bear." ⁴⁵

Dr Schmukler, who has worked closely with the Singers at Yale, believes that slower paced programmes are better for children, although parents and teachers don't approve of them.

The director of Television Services at the University of the Witwatersrand, Kate Turkington, considers that the SABC is not doing enough to encourage children to get up and do things. She believes the early magazine programme Compass which attempted to do this, was the best children's programme to date.

"Television is a wonderful educator. Research shows that with words alone, learning retention is about 35 per cent, with pictures alone, it's approximately 50 per cent - with words and pictures retention jumps to 85 to 90 per cent. But it must be properly researched." ⁴⁶

Dr Daan van Vuuren of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), has been involved in research into the effects of television on older children and adolescents. His

findings, although admittedly only covering the first two years of South African television, indicate that children who watch television tended to become better socialisers and more group oriented. He suggests three possible reasons for this :

- (1) Because they had last night's programmes to talk about.
- (2) Some TV characters were seen as outgoing models to be imitated.
- (3) They realise that other people have the same problems as themselves and feel freer to talk about them.⁴⁷

Dr van Vuuren found that other activities such as reading, homework and sport were affected but only to a small degree. Standard Five boys are still reading as many books, but fewer comics and photo-comics. Reading has become less popular with girls though they are showing a tendency to read more newspapers. Fewer Standard Eight boys are playing rugby and doing athletics. TV appears to have stimulated an interest in cricket and soccer⁴⁸.

In the study Broadcasting and Youth⁴⁹ commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Independent Broadcasting

Authority and the Manpower Services Commission, an attempt is made to look at what broadcasting is doing and, more importantly, might do in the future to meet the needs of young adults, particularly the less advantaged. The study maintains that young adults have needs which are quite distinct from the rest of the adult population and that these needs are not being adequately met by broadcasters at present. It argues strongly for new areas of educational programming and for more popular programming for young adults at both local and national levels.

The study stressed the importance of local/regional broadcasting, stating that this 'educational dimension' has not been sufficiently exploited in relation to young people's needs. Schools and college broadcasting makes a contribution, but broadcasters should not see that as "their only or even major response"⁵⁰.

The report is careful not to exaggerate the power of broadcasting in terms of what it can do for the young, noting that it will not "create the jobs which so many young people are condemned to search for in vain". When regarding the sort of things that broadcasting can do, it mentioned the fact that broadcasts could easily fall into the trap of keeping young people out of trouble, thereby distracting attention from the real problem

- offering "circuses" when what is needed is "bread"⁵¹.

In suggesting ways in which broadcasting can do more than act as a palliative, the report recognises the erroneous, but unavoidable assumption, that 'young people' are a homegeneous group. Thus any statements about the needs of young people must be read with caution. Nevertheless, the report identifies certain areas where young people need help where broadcasting may have a role.

Areas like the provision of basic educational skills, including literacy, numeracy and social and life skills, by which is meant principally the practical techniques of making and doing, including seeking advice, claiming entitlements, elementary budgeting, leisure needs and applying for jobs, as well as a greater understanding of oneself in relation to others.

Important, too, for many young people, is help with understanding personal relationships, particularly those involved in the transition from the dependence of school to the independence of taking a place in the adult world; and in moving from a society relatively homogeneous in age to one in which they will have to deal with a variety of different age and interest groups.

Many young people, even those reasonably equipped in elementary skills, have very little understanding of general political, social and economic matters, or of the nature of the industrial and commercial worlds. The report points out that within this broad context, they need greater specific careers' education and guidance, including information about the realities of working life (physical, social, emotional), the nature of jobs, the inter-relationship between job aspirations and educational requirements, the ability to develop 'job search' skills, the opportunities for further education and training and the sources of advice and support⁵².

The report concludes that broadcasting is much more effective when it works in conjunction with other agencies such as correspondence colleges, volunteer agencies, further and higher education, newspapers and magazines. In the South African context it is not difficult to imagine the impact of schools and universities, e.g. the University of South Africa, being able to utilise the power of television in bringing the country's best teachers and lecturers to every corner of the land.

South Africa's current lack of a regional television network would inhibit this form of broadcasting/other agency link-up for community education or information purposes.

A number of interesting recommendations emerge from the British report Broadcasting and Youth. Some could have relevance to the South African situation. The following are worthy of consideration :

- (1) The need for research into the media usage patterns among young people.
- (2) Further enquiry into the social situation of young adults, including their emotional and leisure needs. (In the South African situation cognizance of attitudes to Sunday sport and entertainment prohibitions would need to be taken into account.)
- (3) Broadcasting institutions should alter their present organisational structures to ensure that the special needs of the fourteen to twenty-one age group are adequately catered for.
- (4) There should be more popular and informative programmes for young adults, scheduled at times when young people (and their parents) are available to view at home, e.g. weekend mornings or between 5.00 and 7.00 p.m. during the week.
- (5) Extra broadcast provision should be made for the educational needs of young adults as previously discussed.

- (6) Regional television should do more to develop a pattern of local coverage on programme topics like unemployment where local need is critical.
- (7) Television programmes, whether 'educational' or 'general', networked or regional, should, where possible, be developed in co-operation with external voluntary and statutory agencies, to provide programme follow-up and support activities.
- (8) The appropriate agencies should investigate the possibilities of an increased use of radio and video cassettes in schools, colleges and industrial and commercial training schemes - and when feasible within the home.
- (9) The formation of a Young Adult Unit whose function would be to help stimulate collaboration and co-ordinate action between the media and young adults; provide channels of communication between the two and the general public; and especially, help formulate and present the young adult's needs to all concerned.⁵³

In analysing the report Broadcasting and Youth, a number of criticisms emerge. The major criticism is that the emphasis throughout the report is on broadcasting

as an instrument of education. This is hardly surprising when in examining the composition of the study's steering committee : it is discovered that only three out of the committee's fourteen members are not employed in an educational capacity⁵⁴.

Of the 158 individuals and organisations consulted in the study, only seventeen appeared not to be connected with education, career opportunities, etc.⁵⁵.

More direct contact with representative samples of young adults themselves, instead of those in close proximity to them, would, in all probability, have provided greater insights into how youth regards broadcasting as a provider of entertainment, an extremely important social consideration.

A point worth making is that with the increase in viewing options, via the new technology, particularly cable television, providing an ever increasing choice of programmes, it is probably optimistic to expect young people to show a preference for educational/informational programmes over entertainment and sport. Thus, even if the very sensible recommendations for an increase in educational/informational programmes are implemented, there is no guarantee that young people will watch them. On the contrary, unless young people and their

parents are taught to view television in a selective way, as good schools try and teach pupils to discriminate between good and bad reading material, educational broadcasting will only have any meaning within the confines of the school or college.

This in itself is a major challenge. Most viewers have come to regard television as escapism. Above all, they turn to television for entertainment. A major criticism, voiced by Shulman and other writers on the media, is that commercial television seeks to give the viewers what they want (entertainment) almost to the exclusion of all else.

Shulman in discussing the dilemma facing BBC-2, the channel on British television (originally) devoted to over sixty percent of serious programmes, commented :

" . . . in 1971 there were twenty-five million people with sets capable of receiving BBC-2, there was no sign that there had been a significant drift of viewers to the junior channel (BBC-1 being the corporation's major channel). Something like five percent of the potential audience - if we accept JICTAR (industry audience research organisation) figures - regularly watched BBC-2. It had ominously and stubbornly remained at this figure for a number of years. Like

National Educational Television in America, which attracted about two per-cent of the nation's viewers, BBC-2 seemed to have acquired a reputation as a cultural ghetto. It was a reputation which would, in the end, discourage the average viewer from watching it . . . "56

More recently, BBC-2 has increased its audience figures significantly, but only as a result of becoming more involved in popular entertainment programming. It still, quite rightly, retains its reputation for quality and innovation.

Educational/informative programming of the type advocated in Broadcasting and Youth will have to compete for viewers with a profusion of entertainment offerings. The inference seems to be that only the highest quality and imaginative programmes will stand a chance. The question then remains how realistic are the report's recommendations?

The other aspect prompting criticism is the recommendation concerning the formation of a Young Adult Unit to co-ordinate action between the media and 'other agencies'. No clear workable framework emerges. This is a pity, as the report makes a good case for a 'junction box'

to bring educators, employers, youth workers and young people themselves together. However, in reality it is difficult to visualise a workable infrastructure to say nothing about the justification of its cost.

There can be little doubt that Broadcasting and Youth is one of the most important contributions to the subject in recent years. It is difficult to fault its underlying theme of utilising the broadcasting media to the benefit of young people as an extension of public service broadcasting. If it is flawed, it is perhaps in the assumption that given the programming policy advocated, young people would necessarily respond by watching and listening. This assumption must remain questionable in considering the range and quality of programme choices made available by the new technology. The study's methodology in seeking out prominent people in close proximity with youth (mainly educationalists) probably accounts for the optimistic predictions for the future of the electronic media as instruments of information and education. The reality will probably fall somewhat short of this idealistic expectation, with most young people continuing to exercise their preference for entertainment and sport over education and information, where they as individuals are in a position to choose. It is in the more formal setting, e.g. the school or college, where the true potential of the broadcasting

media as envisaged by the study's compilers will be realised.

4.2.1 Parental Influence and Children's Television Viewing Behaviour

In a survey entitled Television and Children, Australia 1977/78 for the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, deficiencies in parental control were observed where parents were shown not to be able to exert as much influence over their children's television behaviour as they would have liked. Control over viewing before school, over-viewing while doing homework and over-prohibitions on times and content were often ineffective. It appeared that because television was so appealing to children and almost continuously available to them, it was inevitable that most children would eventually breach their parents' requirements⁵⁷.

However, parents had much more success in getting their children to watch particular programmes, usually of an educational or informational nature. Significantly, the report states that

"since these programmes were among those most disliked by children, there was no reason to suppose

that parents' interventions here would be frequent or effective in producing a long-term change in viewing habits

. . . Television viewing was an activity that saturated the home activities of children, 56% watching more than three hours a day. Viewing occurred before school, after school, during meals and homework and at night and at weekends . . . "58

Previous research suggests that television has significant effects both positive and negative on the social development of children. An American study by Rojas⁵⁹ confirmed many of the findings in the Australian work concerning parental influence and children's viewing behaviour. Rojas investigated the relationship between

- (1) parental TV viewing patterns;
- (2) parental techniques for controlling children's TV viewing; and
- (3) children's TV viewing patterns based on total weekly TV viewing; viewing frequency for particular programmes; perception of violence in TV programmes; and perception of TV's educational value.

The results revealed a moderately positive relationship between parents and their children in total amount of viewing and viewing frequency of specific TV programmes. Low positive correlations between parents and their children were found for perception of violence and of educational value. These findings suggest that parents have a slight influence on their children's viewing patterns.

Several findings emerged from the analyses of correlations between the Parental Control Index and children's TV viewing patterns. Slight negative relationships were found between the amount of children's TV viewing and the level of parental control. Also, it was found that the more controlling the parents, the more likely it was that their sons :

- (1) perceived low educational value in TV programmes;
- (2) did not watch sexually explicit programmes; and
- (3) did watch family-oriented programmes.

No relationships between parental control and daughters' TV viewing patterns were observed. These results indicate that parents are more likely to control their sons' TV viewing than they are to control their daughters' TV viewing.

FIGURE 4-1 : SCHULZ CARTOON

The Cape Times, February 6, 1982



must be taught about violence so that they can learn to master it.

Quoting Freud's views on the future,

"The fateful question for the human species is mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction."⁶¹

Bettelheim believes that by denying outlets for the human instinct of violence, they can build up to a pitch where they can no longer be controlled. The present outcry against children playing with toy guns is an over-reaction, as he maintains such play provides the safety valve that drains off small amounts of violence, leaving a balance that can be managed.

". . . I am convinced that neither comics, nor TV, nor even James Bond corrupts children, despite all the warnings that these media are seducing the innocent . . . Violence exists and each of us is born with his potential for it. We are also born with opposite tendencies and these must be carefully nurtured if they are to offset the violence. To do this one must know the nature of the enemy."⁶²

In discussing the mass of conflicting literature on the psychological effects of TV, Dr Ner Littner, a psychiatrist specializing in the psychoanalytic treatment of children and adults at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, claims that the literature can be used to prove anything you want it to. He blames this situation on the lack of scientifically valid studies, pointing out the formidable problems in trying to measure the specific psychological effects of TV upon the viewer, e.g. the psychological impact of violence⁶³.

The major research problems he lists as :

- (1) How do you factor out the specific variable you are trying to measure?
- (2) What is your definition of violence?
- (3) How do you compare the unreality of the violence in many of the children's shows against the realistic portrayal of a savage beating?
- (4) How does humour affect the impact?
- (5) What if the violence is justified?
- (6) Where do you get a control group to compare and contrast with the group exposed to the violence in viewing?

- (7) How do you measure the full effects of the TV viewing upon the viewer?
- (8) How can you follow the viewer for the length of time necessary to get full and complete results?
- (9) How do you accurately determine what is cause and what is effect?⁶⁴

Because of these severe methodological constraints, Dr Littner prefers to rely on his own observations of the effects of television violence. The most relevant of these, from the South African perspective, are summarised as follows :

- "1. The vast amount of violence on television is basically *a reflection of the violent interests of the viewers*;* it is a symptom, not a cause; it graphically portrays the violence in our souls . . .
- 2. I do not believe that television violence when *honestly portrayed*,* engenders violence in viewers of any age who were not violent already; and I do not believe that it raises violent impulses to an uncontrollable pitch in

*Littner's italics

those who are already violent.

3. I do think, however, that for some who are already violently disposed, TV violence may provide a model, a *modus operandi**, when they choose to discharge their violent urges. However, a book, a newspaper, or a radio programme may fulfil the same role.
4. As far as *dishonest** (gratuitous or uncalled for) television violence is concerned, I do think that exposure to repeated doses may possibly interfere, to a degree unmeasurable at present, with the normal development of impulse control in normal or disturbed children; but I do not think that '*dishonest*'* television violence has any marked pathological impact on the average adult.
5. Instead of wasting their efforts on such red herrings as censorship, violence, sex or nudity, I think that both the viewing public and the television industry would be far better off if the television industry would devote its considerable talents and energies to creating conditions that would make it possible to develop and screen

*Littner's italics

television shows specialising in such qualities as excellence, artistic value, creativity, originality, honesty and integrity. If *these* were the hallmark of our television shows, we would not have to worry about possible censorship of their violence, sex or nudity."⁶⁵

Commentators like Littner tend to see increasing television violence as a reflection of the more violent aspects of society and a sign of the times. The relaxation of censorship in terms of displays of sex and the treatment of moral issues in general also include a greater tolerance of violence. The shock effect of violence is also recognised as a commercial asset working to the detriment of genuine art and creativity.

Some positive effects are also observed. Displays of violence tend to present the world as it is, rather than in an idealistic way, so there is an educational element. The safety valve aspect, previously discussed, can help discharge various violent feelings and tendencies in the viewer.

The negative effects of television violence tend to

*Littner's italics

centre around the possible harming of the child, or adolescent, who is still evolving behavioural patterns. There is a danger that constant exposure to violence as a 'television-approved' method for solving problems could result in imitative behaviour, particularly if violence is also the family way to resolve difficulties. The *modus operandi* argument is also considered valid here in that even though television violence may not cause juvenile delinquency, it can contribute techniques for a child already delinquent⁶⁶.

It is generally believed the impact of repeated exposure to excessive violence depends on at least three factors :

- (1) the age of the viewer;
- (2) the maturity of the viewer; and
- (3) the way in which the violence is presented and packaged⁶⁷.

When examined in the South African context, these factors highlight some of the programming complexities facing the television broadcaster. Because television in South Africa is a mass medium segmented only as yet by language criteria and lacking the socio-economic and cultural benefits associated with decentralised/

regional television systems, even greater care has to be exercised when dealing with sensitive issues than would be the case in a more homogeneous society.

The regular and recurrent spectacle of violence might, according to the ITV Code⁶⁸, lead viewers to think violence in one form or another has been *given the stamp of approval*. Once violence is thus accepted and tolerated people will, it is believed, tend to become *more callous*, more indifferent to the suffering imposed on the victims of violence.

An acceptable minimum of violence in each individual programme may add up to an intolerable level over a period. ITV also places great stress on the time of screening of each programme. Adults, it is believed, can be safely exposed to more violence than children. ITV policy of 'family viewing time' until 9.00 p.m. is aimed at protecting children from what may be considered unsuitable programmes.

Regarding the presentation of televised violence, the ITV Code contains the following statement :

"There is no evidence that 'sanitised' or 'conventional' violence, in which the consequences are concealed, minimised

or presented in a ritualistic way, is innocuous. It may be just as dangerous to society to conceal the results of violence or to minimise them, as to let people see clearly the full consequences of violent behaviour, however gruesome : what may be better for society, may be emotionally more upsetting or more offensive for the individual viewer."⁶⁹

Milton Shulman, with a finely honed logic, presents a strong argument that violence and what he terms "entertainment - biased" television are related :

" . . . If a substantial proportion of programmes . . . depict violence as normal, acceptable and even moral, why should not that message be as persuasive as commercials successfully selling the aphrodisiacal powers of armpit deodorants? Entertainment television as organised in Britain, America and Canada, relies for a large measure of its contents upon programmes in which overt or concealed violence is a major ingredient of their appeal. Is it possible, then, that one of the loudest messages of the box, - that violence is normal and merely mirrors life - has gone unheard when other messages . . . concerning goods, politicians, religion, industry and trade unions constantly make an impact which society recognizes and acknowledges?"⁷⁰

Shulman attacks the earlier research findings which minimised the effects of television violence, or like Littner rejected the methodology and evidence on which to form conclusive judgements. Shulman points to the accumulation of long-term evidence, mainly in the form of governmental investigations into the connection between violence and television, stating that :

"there are now few serious broadcasters or social scientists left who would stoutly maintain that there is no causal relationship between violence and the box"⁷¹.

Much of Shulman's more detailed examination of television and violence in his book The Ravenous Eye⁷², reflects the findings of both President Johnson's Commission on Violence in 1969 and the U.S. Surgeon General's Report in 1972 where the 'cathartic effect' argument, whereby violence acted as a safety-valve to drain off violence harmlessly, was rejected. On the contrary, President Johnson's committee said that the vast majority of experimental studies did not support the catharsis theory and found that observed violence *stimulated* aggressive behaviour rather than the reverse⁷³.

4.3.1 News Coverage of Violence

With the almost constant spate of aircraft hijackings, kidnappings, hostage takings, etc., certain questions are posed. Can television become a tool for individuals with a cause to use at will to influence public opinion?

Is television by reporting the news, actually creating it? Is the public being manipulated by a series of carefully constructed 'media events'?

Sam Iker, writing on the controversy and cataloguing a whole succession of violent events in the United States, each receiving heavy live television coverage, had this to say :

" . . . All it seemed to take to get on television was a gun, a sense of desperation and a knowledge of how the media work. Given the competitive nature of the news business, violence, or the threat of violence often ensured instant local and sometimes national and international TV attention.

The phenomenon wasn't new. Television thrives on dramatic, action-filled pictures. There were the race riots in the United States in the 1960's, many recorded on film. Battle scenes

from Vietnam brought the war into
American living rooms . . . "74

There is nothing new in television being manipulated as a news medium. What was new however was the growing use of violence to gain widespread publicity. A world-wide audience, for example, watched the awful drama of the 1972 Olympics' terrorist raid in Munich unfold via television satellite. In the Netherlands in 1977, a band of South Moluccan nationalists seized a train and a school-house to publicise their goal of independence for their island homeland⁷⁵.

Advances in technology providing instant live coverage coupled to competitive pressures to be first with the news are believed by many leading journalists to be interfering with news judgement. The television newsman's dilemma is that he recognises that he is, in part, glorifying the lawbreaker - making heroes out of non-heroes and being used⁷⁶.

Fred J. Hacker, an authority on international terrorism, claimed that :

"it can hardly be denied that the news media is a major influence in the spread of these sorts of incidents..
Television is especially a medium of

contagion. It is obvious that what is being shown is also being imitated. Television sells breakfast food. Why shouldn't it sell violence?"⁷⁷

Even if it were desirable, it would be difficult to formulate practical guidelines for news policy for live television coverage. Certainly any attempt on behalf of government bodies to impose official constraints is met with universal condemnation and accusations of infringement on freedom of the press. The Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media (Chapter 3) and the South African government's subsequent intention to form a Media Council, provides evidence of just how sensitive these issues are.

In the late 1960's, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) News President Richard Salant told the President's Commission on Violence that :

"the First Amendment (which guarantees freedom of the press) has put a priority on the importance of the right of the people to know. If you exclude from your normal news judgement a whole area of legitimate news happenings because reporting the truth is likely to cause some effects, then you're in serious trouble . . . I would argue more vigorously that

there never should be anything excluded from news if it is legitimate news."⁷⁸

National Broadcasting Company (NBC) President Julian Goodman could almost be referring to the antagonism between the South African government and the English language press when he states :

"It has long been a fact of life for the journalist that those who do not like what they read, or hear, or see, are apt to condemn him and his medium for distorting truth. And it is an easy step from there to suggesting that the reporter and the medium contributed to problems by reporting them. In short, the medium is blamed for the message."⁷⁹

A fitting summary to what many consider to be an insoluble problem comes from the highly respected Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) news anchorman Walter Cronkite :

"We cannot control the events that need to be reported. All we can do is be responsible in reporting the events that occur."⁸⁰

Some television news executives maintain that full coverage of violent incidents has positive value in

that denying terrorists air-time could cause them to escalate their violence in order to get publicity. It is believed by some that putting them on the air satisfies some of their motivation for the act and lessens the danger to hostages. This catharsis effect can possibly relax tension but many would argue that there is a fine line between using television for its therapeutic potential and the contagion factor⁸¹.

In recent years there has been growing concern regarding the level of violence in Western societies. This concern has been expressed by opinion leaders from all sections of the community, church leaders, politicians, the police and sociologists. In expressing their concern, these opinion leaders invariably link television with violence in society.

In its research report Television and the Public, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal stated :

"A wide cross-section of people in countries around the world have shown a continuing concern about the amount of violence in television programmes and the possible effects on viewers. While the public cannot be expert on the effects of violence, their concern should be taken into account by those responsible for programming."⁸²

In a more recent American overview by John P. Murray of what research has to say about television and its affects on young people, Television and Youth - 25 Years of Research and Controversy, this exhaustive study examines the cumulative evidence on the effects of televised violence and concludes that it is extremely unlikely that research will ever establish a clear and concise causal link between viewing violent programmes and subsequent acts of aggression but :

"there is one broad conclusion that is quite clear, namely, that there is a relationship between violence on television and violence in society."⁸³

4.4 TELEVISION'S EDUCATIONAL ROLE

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Report (December 1981) on the amount of time that South African children spend watching television was the cause of some concern in the light of some of its findings, namely that time allocated to doing homework had dropped and an indication that there was evidence of negative attitudes to study developing.

Standard Eight pupils, according to the research, viewed for about seventeen hours a week and matriculants

fifteen hours. The HSRC considered these figures 'significant' when it is taken into account that high school pupils spend about thirty hours a week at school⁸⁴.

4.4.1 Television's Effects on Reading

The HSRC report, like a number of overseas studies, was unable to establish a clear picture of the effect of television on reading but the general trend of statistics in the report would seem to indicate that the level of reading competence has dropped⁸⁵.

Wilbur Schramm in his classic study of 1961 showed that television has had a bigger impact than any other leisure-time pursuit on the amount of reading a child does⁸⁶. Schramm established, contrary to the thinking of pessimists, that elementary school children with the highest marks in school, were also the heaviest television watchers. He also concluded that TV helped the low achievers develop vocabulary skills that the non-television child did not have. According to Schramm, children in the early school years are heavy viewers of television. At about age ten, however, children of better ability (IQ of 115 or higher) reached what he called a "saturation point". The middle and lower

intelligence groups reached the saturation point some time later. In the late 1950's Himmelweit found that television not only stimulates reading interests of British students, but broadened their tastes⁸⁷.

A more recent study by Busch⁸⁸, in 1978, supported Schramm's 1961 study in most respects. Busch found that educators, realising the impact that television has had on students, have begun to integrate the medium into their instructional programmes.

"Teachers use television as a tool for teaching instead of denying its existence and importance."⁸⁹

Busch concluded, like most other researchers, that the future of reading in relation to television remains a mystery.

"Some researchers feel that without variety in programming, television may be producing a shallow, common-denominator audience. The children affected by this type of programming may come to depend entirely upon the audiovisual media to gain useful information. Television will then truly become the overwhelming shaping force in our society."⁹⁰

Most Americans and Europeans now turn to television as their major source of information. Indeed, a newspaper readership research survey in America has established that the 18 to 34 age group was no longer reading newspaper⁹¹.

Does that finding mean that America is becoming a nation of illiterates? Hardly. Television became commercially active in the United States in 1950, when there were 97 stations on the air. In that year 8 600 book titles were published.

By the end of 1979, there were 800 commercial television stations, plus an additional 275 educational stations. That year there had been a five hundred percent increase in the number of books published to well over 40 000 titles⁹².

Dr T.K. Minter, Deputy Commissioner, U.S. Office of Education, probably has the right perspective when he said :

"Television literacy has the potential for developing other literacies. Specifically, critical and active viewing of television has the potential for stimulating reading."⁹³

This in itself is a strong argument for programme choice. It also poses the question : will television literacy be inhibited in South African viewers by continuing to restrict television to a state monopoly broadcasting system, offering virtually no channel choice?

Television is often accused of debasing the English language. Eric Savareid, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) commentator and a strong defender of television in American society, claims that this is nonsense :

" . . . Until radio, and then TV, tens of millions of people living in share-cropper cabins, in small villages on the plains and in the mountains, in the great city slums, had never heard good English diction in their lives. If anything, this medium has improved the general level of diction . . . " ⁹⁴

4.4.2 British Educational Broadcasting

Educational television is now firmly established in most Western countries. The UK is a good example of its application where the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) co-ordinate their efforts to the public good.

The IBA Act requires ITV to provide such programmes as an essential part of its schedules.

In the 1960's, schools, universities, polytechnics and colleges of further and higher education multiplied. Educational broadcasting expanded to keep pace with these developments.

The hours of BBC educational broadcasting in 1974 - 1975 on network radio and television are set out in Table 4-1 (overleaf).

The BBC's schools, further education and Open University production departments each produced approximately 300 hours of television programmes in 1975 - 1976. Excluding local radio productions, BBC school programmes cost £3,2 million in 1974 - 1975 and further education programmes cost £2,9 million. In addition, the BBC received £2,9 million from the Open University for producing and transmitting programmes for the University. Open University programmes are paid for from a grant the University receives from the Department of Education and Science : all other educational programmes produced and broadcast by the BBC are paid for from its licence fee income⁹⁵.

There is less educational broadcasting on ITV. The

TABLE 4-1
BBC EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING HOURS,
1974 - 1975

(A) Radio	Pre-School	Primary	Secondary	Further Education	Open University
First* Transmission	7h	213h40m	186h 30m	124h 20m	480h 30m
Transmissions Repeated in Same Week	-	28h	-	192h 30m	480h 30m
Scotland Only					
First	-	47h40m	20h 30m	-	-
Repeated	-	10h	-	-	-
Wales Only					
First	2h 30m	89h40m	3h 20m	6h	-
Repeated	75m	2h40m	-	6h	-
N. Ireland Only					
First	-	9h20m	10h	-	-
Repeated	-	-	-	-	-

*Some were programmes which had been transmitted in previous years

Table 4-1 (continued)

(B) Television	Pre-School	Primary	Secondary	Further Education	Open University
First* Transmission	8h 24m	70h	84h 15m	126h 20m	430h 30m
Transmissions Repeated in Same Week	8h 24m	70h	84h 15m	163h 20m	430h 30m
Scotland Only					
First	-	10h 40m	7h	4h 10m	-
Repeated	-	10h 40m	7h	4h 10m	-
Wales Only					
First	-	16h	-	8h 20m	-
Repeated	-	13h 40m	-	8h 20m	-
N. Ireland Only					
First	-	4h 40m	-	-	-
Repeated	-	4h 40m	-	-	-

*Some were programmes which had been transmitted in previous years

Source : Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting,
March 1977, p.301.

average output of the fourteen different ITV areas in 1974 - 1975 is shown in Table 4-2 (overleaf). The cost of ITV's pre-school and school programmes in 1974 - 1975 was of the order of £1.5 million and its adult educational programmes about £1 million.

The strongest demand for expansion in educational broadcasting was for post-school education. The Open University in its evidence to the Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting claimed that because of the lack of suitable air-time, many of its courses were facing the prospect of not having their programmes repeated and therefore at least one-fifth of its students would not have the opportunity of seeing the programmes related to their courses. In 1974 - 1975 the University used about thirty hours a week on radio and the same number of hours on television for its courses. By 1984, by which time it planned to provide eighty-seven full credit undergraduate courses, it would need fifty-one hours a week of television air-time and thirty-nine radio hours. Many proposals were also made for increasing educational opportunities for adults working at sub-degree level for an 'Open University' type of course.

The working partnership between the Open University and the BBC is highly regarded as the most innovative

TABLE 4-2
ITV EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING HOURS,
1974 - 1975

Television	First Transmissions	Repeat Transmissions
Pre-School (excluding Channel TV)	45 hrs 45 mins	21 hrs
Primary	17 hrs	64 hrs 45 mins
Middle (9-12 yrs)	28 hrs 15 mins	62 hrs
Secondary	29 hrs 15 mins	62 hrs
Adult Education	118 hrs 15 mins	36 hrs 45 mins

Source : Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting,
March 1977, p.302.

development in British adult education of the past half century⁹⁶.

It is known that the University of South Africa (UNISA) had a part to play in the setting up of Britain's Open University because of its unique experience over many years with correspondence degree courses.

Many South African educationalists would advocate that perhaps the SABC together with UNISA and/or other universities, should now, in the short-term, be allowed to follow the successful BBC-Open University formula, utilizing the current large amounts of spare capacity on SABC television.

Many of these South African educationalists would like to see a plural broadcasting system permitting independent television to play a part in educational broadcasting in the longer term, particularly at a regional level⁹⁷.

Currently, educational material accounts for about eleven percent of each ITV company's weekly output. There are three main categories of audience for ITV's educational programmes : young children under five years of age, viewing at home, in a nursery school or playgroup; students in school or college; and the

adult viewer at home. Figure 4-2 (overleaf) shows diagrammatically the planning process used by the IBA before educational programmes reach schools.

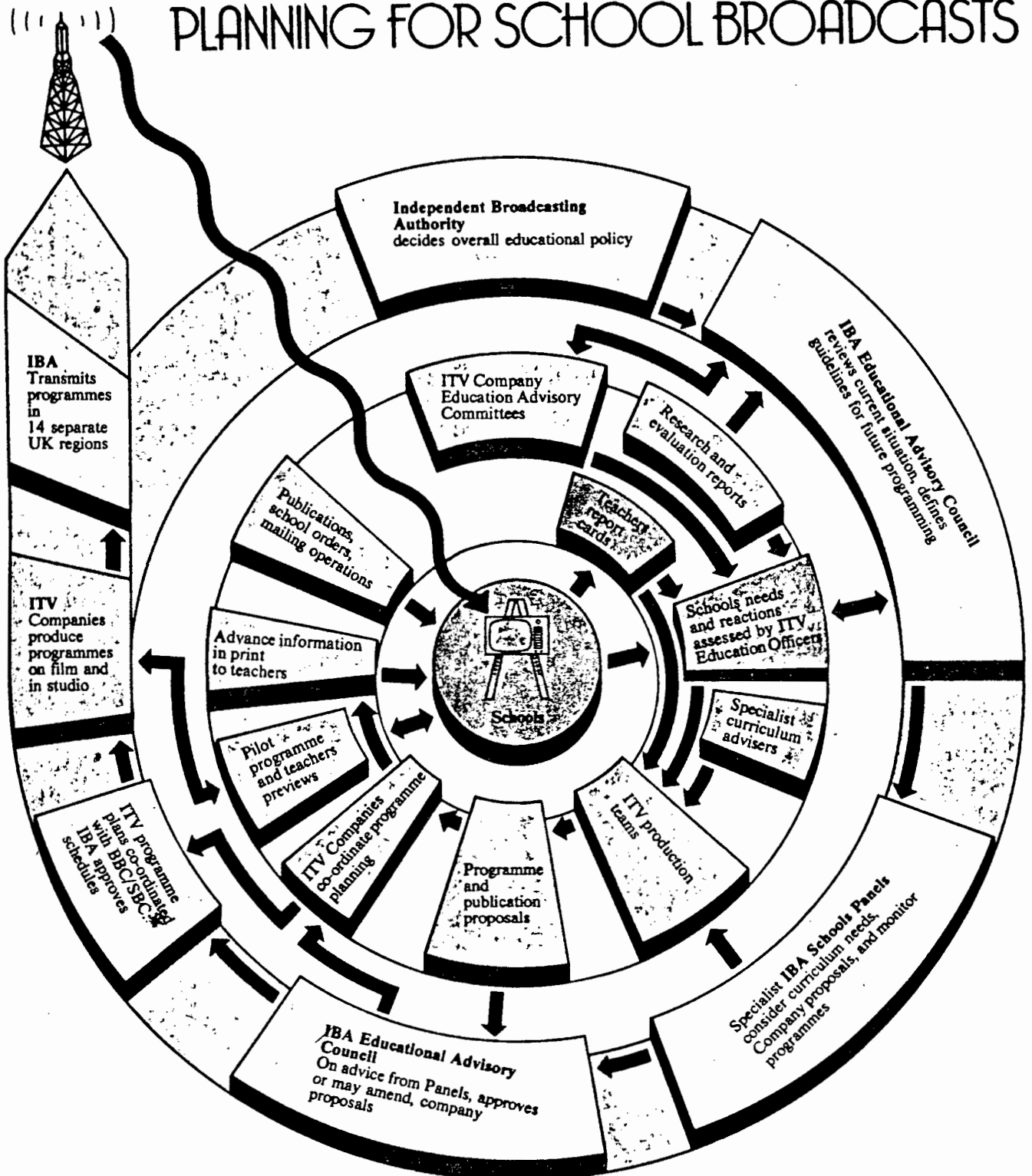
Great emphasis is placed on trying to meet the needs of special groups - the young unemployed, the middle-aged facing retirement, the elderly, ethnic minorities, the disabled, etc.

Priority topics are also selected. New technology and its social implications, alternatives to employment, adult basic skills all take their place beside the traditional subject areas for which there is constant demand.

With the arrival of Channel Four towards the end of 1982, ITA has announced that of the new channel's initial output of some 50 evening hours, fifteen percent will be educational. This means that approximately an hour per night will consist of programmes validated through an advisory council of educationalists and specially produced to further explicit educational purposes. In addition, since the channel is expected to serve minorities and to seek out innovative ways of broadcasting, it is likely to contain many programmes of a generally, if less deliberately, educational character. As all Channel Four's broadcasts

FIGURE 4-2

PLANNING FOR SCHOOL BROADCASTS



*BBC School Broadcasting Council

Source : Television & Radio 1981 - Focus on Independent Broadcasting, p.73.

will be networked, the IBA will be encouraging regional stations to produce more local adult education programmes⁹⁸.

In a statement to the press, the IBA gave this general indication of its expectations for educational programming :

"The Authority hopes that the Fourth Channel, in trying to serve fresh educational needs, will use to the full some new and exciting opportunities. We attach special importance to reaching individuals and not only audiences : and this requires connections to be made between broadcasts and the means which exist outside broadcasting to follow up the interest created by programmes . . . The power of broadcasting resides not only in direct teaching but, perhaps even more, in its power to stir and arouse, to motivate and stimulate. We believe that collaboration with a wide range of outside agencies offers the prospect of a new and fruitful partnership to serve the audience."⁹⁹

The new catch-phrase 'television literacy' presents an exciting challenge to educational broadcasters.

The impact of the medium has only just been felt in South Africa. Educational television is said to be a high priority with Professor Mouton, Chairman of the SABC. South Africa has an enormous educational task ahead, complicated by the awesome problems posed by a multicultural, heterogeneous population. It is, however, fortunate in having a wealth of excellent educational television experience gained in overseas countries to draw on.

The Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) investigation into South African education contained proposals from the South African Chamber of Industries for television services to be extended and developed to bring the country's best teachers into contact with the masses¹⁰⁰.

It is known that the SABC is eager to extend its public service role by responding to this educational need and educational television is expected to begin in 1984. However, the size and economics of the task are such that it would be totally unrealistic to expect South Africa's existing television structure to be able to make the kind of response called for. It is to be hoped that private sector involvement in the form of an independent television network will be invited to share in this historic social challenge.

4.5 TELEVISION AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Where television is under the control of the state in a monopoly situation like the South African example, broadcasting (even if it is commercial, in the sense that advertising is a major form of revenue) aspires to be a public service. That is, commercial interests are, in theory, not allowed to predominate over broadcasting policy and all citizens are entitled to benefit from the services offered regardless of where they live and what language they speak.

This has always been SABC policy and 'public service' has always been the motivating force for new developments. This philosophy is clearly demonstrated in the developing Black channels of TV2 and TV3. Only when a basic service has reached the vast majority of the population will the Corporation be in a position to consider important issues like educational television, regional television and alternative channels for entertainment.

The concept of public service broadcasting in South Africa has developed along similar lines to the United Kingdom. Priorities have been very much the same, with the government attempting to ensure that the population is guarded from over-exploitation by commercial interests and the 'right' balance in programm-

ing between information, education and entertainment is maintained.

In the United States the concept of public service broadcasting is comparatively new. Private enterprise organisations, motivated by commercial interests have been responsible for the formation of the major networks, their affiliates and the hundreds of independent television stations across the country.

In 1967 the Public Broadcasting Act established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a non-profit organisation responsible for distributing federally appropriated funds to public broadcasting. In 1969 CPB in conjunction with the independent public television stations established the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

Today PBS is the national membership organisation of independent television stations. It operates a satellite-interconnected system for the distribution of programmes to 292 stations across the United States. PBS provides a wide range of public service programmes, divided into three separate national services : PTV-1 is responsible for the presentation of prime time, general audience programmes. Drawing from many sources, such as public television stations, independent producers,

American and foreign distributors, PTV-1 features major first-run drama productions, public affairs programmes, outstanding stage, concert hall and festival performances, and programmes on science and the universe.

PTV-2 is designed to provide special interest programmes to specific audiences. This includes target minority and women's programming, skills and self-improvement series, sports events coverage, and special events public affairs programming.

PTV-3 is responsible for educational programmes including : children's programmes, adult learning and post-secondary enrichment and in-school instructional programming¹⁰¹. Table 4-3 (overleaf) shows how PBS was financed in 1980.

PBS is a uniquely American solution to public service broadcasting. In an ingenious yet extremely practical way government and private funding is put to work using the new technology of satellite broadcasting and the existing network of independent television stations. The immediate question then arises : could public service broadcasting in South Africa be enhanced by drawing on this model?

No-one would expect the range and depth of public

TABLE 4-3

HOW THE PBS NATIONAL PROGRAMME SERVICE WAS
FINANCED - 1980

The 1980 PBS schedule of original broadcast programmes (averaging 5½ hours per day) cost \$102,8 million for the year. Funding sources for original programme hours distributed as part of the 1980 PBS National Programme Service included :

PTV Stations	\$29,6 million	28,7%
Corporation for Public Broadcasting (Congressional Appropriation)	\$11,1 million	10,8%
Federal Government (Arts & Humanities Endowments, Office of Education, National Science Foundation, et al.)	\$21,2 million	20,6%
Foundations	\$5,5 million	5,4%
Corporations/Businesses	\$27,7 million	26,9%
Other*	<u>\$7,8 million</u>	<u>7,6%</u>
	\$102,8 million	100,0%

*Includes absorption of production costs by producers and underwriting from such sources as individuals, clubs, societies and state government agencies

Source : PBS Fact Sheet, June 1981

service television as broadcast by PBS's three national programme services to be a reality in South Africa. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that private sector organisations would consider making donations from their public relations appropriations to sponsor informational and educational television programmes as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes, particularly if they could broadcast these programmes through an independent regional television system, working on the basis of an established partnership between the state and the private sector.

4.5.1 The FCC Ascertainment Doctrine

Since 1960, broadcasters in the United States have been required by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to conduct periodic, systematic surveys of opinion leaders and other residents in their communities and service areas.

This requirement, known as the FCC's Ascertainment Doctrine, was intended to encourage greater responsiveness by broadcasters to the problems and needs of the residents of their communities.

Since the late 1960's the Ascertainment Doctrine has

been employed as a weapon by citizen groups interested in influencing programme content. More recently, it has also been used as a defensive weapon by broadcasters in confrontations with citizen groups. The use of the doctrine by both antagonists has resulted in considerable controversy over its effectiveness as an instrument for improving programmes.

Byron B. Renz¹⁰², in a detailed analysis of the doctrine, concludes however that it is in fact an effective instrument in regulating broadcasting so that it operates in the public interest and in accordance with the proscription against censorship of programme content. He considers the doctrine has made a significant contribution to broadcasting regulation.

In any future regional television system in South Africa, a local version of the FCC's Ascertainment Doctrine could be a valuable contributor to providing more meaningful and satisfying television services. Indeed, because of the heterogeneous nature of South Africa's population and regional differences, it is difficult to imagine how a regional service could be effective in terms of public service without this type of periodic and systematic research.

4.5.2 Public Access Television

In many countries where the public service component in television is paramount, access to the medium is now granted as a right. This can take the form of utilising off-peak capacity on conventional over-the-air channels or, as is happening increasingly in the United States, by means of cable television. In essence, citizen groups with a cause or grievance can appeal to a wider audience.

In practice, research tends to indicate the results are disappointing. Programmes were thought to be often boring and badly presented¹⁰³. However, if the users of the service fail to use the medium to its maximum potential, through lack of capital and expertise, this does not detract from the public service broadcasting concept of allowing minorities or others with a cause access to television.

In concluding this chapter on the social implications of television broadcasting, it is necessary to note that public service broadcasting in general has a disappointing record with mass audiences.

Although progress in converting viewers to watch at least some public service programmes is encouraging,

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CHAPTER 5FUNDAMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE STRUCTURE,
OPERATION AND CONTROL OF TELEVISION BROADCASTING5.1 TELEVISION AND CONSUMER WELFARE

When the South African researcher examines the structure and performance of the television industries in America, Australia and, to some extent, the United Kingdom, while leaving aside the comparatively recent developments of cable television in the United States, he is struck initially by the range of programme options (channels). On closer examination, however, the Shulman criticism "more of the same"¹ (see Chapter 4) comes to mind, i.e. most programme contractors appear to be catering for the mass market with programme fare designed to appeal to the lowest common denominator. However, television, particularly in the United States and Australia, where it is supplied at no cost to the viewer (unlike South Africa and the United Kingdom, where the state corporations gain revenue from receiver licences) generates consumer satisfactions that far exceed its costs in employed resources. Even so, a substantial demand for many types of television programme remains unsatisfied. This was a major finding of The

Brookings Institution study of American television (Noll 1973²). The requirement for a broadening of programme options and greater diversity is becoming a reality through the new technology of cable and domestic satellite broadcasting. The United Kingdom, too, expects to go some way in broadening its television offerings with Channel Four, awarded to the Independent Broadcasting Authority, which entered service in late 1982. Australia successfully launched Channel 0/28, in 1981, a service for ethnic minorities that all Australians will eventually be able to watch through a system of (excellent) sub-titling, and is actively considering the implications of domestic satellite and cable television.

In all these countries, television has developed beyond the national and regional stages and, although there is a demand for more programme options and diversity, government agencies and broadcasters are anxious not to seriously erode existing levels of consumer satisfaction, by alterations to the present structure, bringing in new resources and finding the means of paying for them. Advertising revenue is a finite resource in any economy where television innovations, such as cable, have to be funded by advertising and, increasingly, by viewer subscriptions.

Today, 40 percent of American homes are wired for cable³. Even in 1963, Americans of all income groups were prepared to pay for additional television services, but particularly the middle-income group as Table 5-1 (overleaf) illustrates.

Noll et al.⁴ contend that low income households (world-wide) have traditionally been the highest consumers of television probably, in part, because of greater sensitivity to prices of other entertainment. The Hartford Subscription TV (STV) experiment⁵ suggests, but by no means proves, that middle-income groups would be willing to pay much more for the present system than either the rich or the poor.

The Brookings Study, by assuming that the value of television is proportional to the expenditures on increments to viewing, indicated in Table 5-1, weighted by the amount of free TV each income group watches, indicates the estimated \$20 billion value of free television is distributed by income groups as shown in Table 5-2 (page 5-5). (The estimate of \$20 billion for free television was based on a conservative estimate that the value of the service was worth at least \$25 per month per TV household, or about four percent of after-tax household income. This represented approximately seven times the revenues of television.)

TABLE 5-1

RESPONSE OF HOUSEHOLDS TO HARTFORD SUBSCRIPTION
TELEVISION EXPERIMENT, BY INCOME GROUP, 1963-65

Annual Income	% of Subscribers	% of US Households 1965	Average Weekly STV Purchase
Under \$4 000	1,5	33,6	\$0,99
\$4 000-6 999	40,8	25,2	1,25
\$7 000-9 999	43,3	20,6	1,23
\$10 000 +	14,4	20,5	1,18
All groups	100,0	100,0	1,22

Source : Economic Aspects of Television Regulation, Noll et al.,
p.25.

TABLE 5-2
ESTIMATED VALUE OF FREE TELEVISION TO CONSUMERS,
BY INCOME GROUP, 1965

Annual Income	Based on Hartford Data		Based on Selected Income Elasticities					
			0,5		1,0		2,0	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Under \$4 000	240	13	3 980	210	2 520	130	650	34
\$4 000-6 999	8 310	580	6 940	480	5 160	360	2 000	140
\$7 000-9 999	8 680	740	6 810	580	6 390	540	4 430	380
\$10 000 +	2 770	240	8 610	730	11 380	970	17 030	1 450
All groups	20 000	350	20 000	350	20 000	350	20 000	350

Key : 1 = Total (thousands); 2 = Per household

Source : Economic Aspects of Television Regulation, Noll et al.,
p.26.

This would tend to indicate that countries with a large relatively affluent middle-income group are probably more than willing to pay for additional television services far in advance of existing offerings.

For purposes of comparison, Table 5-2 also has estimates of the distribution of television benefits by income according to various assumptions about the relationship of income to the willingness to pay for television. In each case the income elasticity of demand for television is assumed to be equal to a particular value - if, for example, the income elasticity is assumed to be equal to e , then a p percentage increase in income increases the amount a household is willing to pay for television by ep percent. The first case assumes an income elasticity of 0,5, the second an elasticity of 1, and the third an elasticity of 2. (An elasticity of zero suggests that all groups, regardless of income, are willing to pay the same amount per household for TV.)

These calculations are estimates of what each income group would pay rather than have free TV disappear, not of the amount of income viewers would lose if it did. For low-income households especially, the latter is probably much larger than the former.

The Brookings Institution study argues that the existence of free television considerably augments the real income of all viewers, but especially the poor. The amount a low-income household would be willing to pay for any commodity (including television), if its real income in that form were taken away, is almost certain to be less than the payment that would be necessary to compensate for the loss, since at a lower income they would be forced to cut back on their consumption expenditures.

The study stresses the stake the viewing public (US) has in the structure of the television industry in that changes in the broadcast delivery system can cause changes in the real income of consumers. As the value to viewers greatly exceeds the stake industry has in television, any proposed changes to the system creates a strong rationale for weighing the effects on income redistribution⁶.

Unfortunately, in the South African context, the Brookings Institution analysis breaks down. In South Africa television services are subsidised by advertising revenue but viewers are, in addition, obliged to pay a television receiver licence fee, so the service is not free in the American sense. In addition, the equivalent middle-income group is confined to a relatively small percent of the total population. The vast majority

of South African households could probably not afford to subscribe to additional services.

If this is the case, then any additional television services will have to be subsidised by the government, or will have to rely on private sector involvement, utilising the current, acute (excess demand) situation of television advertising.

It seems unlikely that government priorities of defence, education and Black housing needs will permit any meaningful subsidy towards television innovations.

It is to be hoped, however, that the government will see the social and economic advantages of permitting private sector involvement in the next stage of the country's television development.

Where private sector involvement has been tolerated, e.g. the video industry, the response has been remarkable. The phenomenal growth in video cassette recorder (VCR) sales now places South Africa second only to Japan in terms of VCR penetration of TV homes - five percent compared to the US's four percent⁷.

Although the numbers of South Africans who are prepared to pay for the VCR option are insignificant compared

with other Western societies, the exponential sales curve for VCR's illustrates the South African demand for viewing diversity. Video mail order firms are now supplying country districts with packages of sixty films - a year's supply - for R120⁸. The VCR phenomenon is considered in more depth in Chapter 7, Evolution, Innovation and New Technology.

The present system for delivering television programmes in South Africa creates two major inefficiencies in economic welfare terms. It severely restricts programme diversity (or viewer choice) and makes little attempt at satisfying regional requirements.

The present national structure of TV1, TV2/TV3 produces programmes for mass audiences differentiated only by language. It is true that language differentiation must imply the integration in programming of certain cultural components, but the centralised nature of existing services deprives viewers of genuine regional flavour.

It has been argued that a broadcasting monopoly can actually produce more programme diversity as the monopolist is interested in maximising the audience of the entire television system, not of that particular channel⁹. The monopolist has no need to compete with

"more of the same" but can use second and subsequent channels for speciality programmes thus satisfying the consumer requirement of true programme diversity.

Leaving aside, for the moment, the traditional criticisms levelled at monopolies, this argument has some merit. Its major flaw, however, is the inherent assumption of population homogeneity.

South Africa as a developing country, has still a considerable way to go before it reaches, if it ever does, population homogeneity comparable with that of Western Europe or the United States. Television has a role to play in developing national identity, but it should also cater for the special needs of the geographic segments comprising the heterogeneous whole. It follows, then, that future television development should be in the form of a structure that complements the existing national services as well as meeting the special information entertainment and educational requirements of the regions.

The Brookings Institution study of the structure of American television showed that television is capable of generating consumer satisfactions far in excess of costs in resources. Yet even with the US's multiple viewing options compared with South Africa's two channel

system, there remained unfulfilled demand for many types of television programmes. Although the two systems are not comparable for a number of socio-economic reasons, the evidence in the study indicated that America's advertiser-supported, free broadcasting system creates an enormous benefit for the middle- and lower-income groups.

The system was also seen to harbour a number of inefficiencies, among these being : an insensitivity to intensely felt demands of a large minority for particular types of programmes; a scarcity of the most popular mass-audience programmes; an absence of incentives to be alert to the social consequences of programming and advertising; anti-competitive effects on the markets for advertised products; and less advertising than demand and cost conditions justify¹⁰.

While these economic welfare imperfections are apparent in the American television system, they are magnified considerably on examining the South African system, with the possible exception that South Africa's state controlled television does not need incentives to being alert to the social consequences of programming and advertising. Advertising is carefully regulated 'for the public good'. In programming, however, the SABC has tended to prefer non-controversial

often bland formats¹¹.

Where commercial television has become established it is usually accompanied by shifts in advertising revenues from other media, implying a concomitant decline in resources committed to other advertising media that may or may not offset the benefits of television.

Naturally, the South African press is sensitive to any proposals aimed at changing the structure of the television system. The realisation that the growth of television in South Africa is inevitable, brings pressures from the press to be allowed to diversity into television ownership. Some press representatives, mainly Afrikaans, see some justification for considering some kind of subsidy system to preserve the structure of the South African press, where this is thought to be socially desirable. These issues are considered in Chapter 6.

In considering the welfare implications of advertiser-supported television, the Brookings Institution study concluded that an examination of the alternative structures of the television industry should allow for one important point :

"The nature of a television broadcast precludes a solution that meets all of the efficiency criteria as satisfactorily as does a perfectly competitive industry producing a private good. Leaving aside the problem of income distribution, no structure will both ensure equality of price and marginal cost and produce the socially most desirable mix and number of programmes. And no system will be free of fairly high costs of collecting the revenues necessary to reward the resources committed to television. Consequently, a significant number of viewers will always be dissatisfied with the performance of the television industry, regardless of its structure and of public policy toward it . . ." ¹²

5.2 TELEVISION ADVERTISING AND MARKET COMPETITION

In the United States television advertising and its alleged effect on the structure of markets, has become an important anti-trust issue. Probably the best known example was the 1960 ruling by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) that a merger between Clorox and Procter and Gamble should not be permitted, as, according to the FTC, the merger would confer an unfair competitive advantage since the enlarged corporation

could purchase national television at a lower price than its competitors. The decision was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court, and has been cited as a precedent in several subsequent anti-trust actions¹³.

The basis for the FTC ruling was the network policy of granting 'volume discounts' to firms purchasing large amounts of advertising in a particular television year.

Television advertising can also reduce competition by creating a cost barrier to firms and industries that depend on advertising. Noll et al.¹⁴ point out that because the number of television viewers is so large, even a low per-viewer cost means high total expenditures. In an industry in which television advertising is particularly effective, firms must have a large advertising budget - and hence a large volume of business to compete. This situation exactly mirrors the South African case where major national and international corporations have almost exclusive use of the medium. While it is true that a cost barrier is present in all forms of advertising, it is most pronounced in television, particularly in South Africa where firms are forced by channel limitations to buy national coverage for their advertising regardless of differing regional marketing objectives. As the Brookings Institution study points out, this high total cost of television

advertising could be overcome only by fragmenting viewers through a vast increase in the number of television stations¹⁵.

5.3 TELEVISION AND TOTAL ADVERTISING

Another important economic welfare consideration is the extent to which television advertising increases the total amount of advertising in the economy. It is well known that television drains advertising revenues from other media (a major reason why the Newspaper Press Union (NPU) would strongly resist any increase in the existing eight percent of advertising in television programmes by the SABC). It is not so well understood, however, that television increases total demand for advertising. This implies that television does not just siphon off advertising that previously would have been allocated to other media, but, because of its unique characteristics, it is able to generate more advertising revenue than would exist if there was no television.

There are a number of reasons for this. The direct, pervasive nature of the medium, utilising both vision and sound, is able to demonstrate product benefits like no other advertising medium. Whilst it is relatively

easy perceptively to screen out most other forms of advertising, the intrusive nature of television advertising makes it difficult to ignore it. In most Western countries watching television is now the major form of leisure activity. Television is regarded as the most believable communication medium. Individuals also demonstrate a high degree of interest in television commercials. In a public opinion survey, carried out by the Department of Business Science at the University of Cape Town in September 1982, television emerged as the most believable medium, confirming similar findings by international research organisations such as Roper (see Chapter 4, reference 3). Regarding commercials, seventy-five percent of the South African respondents were prepared to tolerate even more advertising on television, provided it resulted in more and better programmes¹⁶.

In a similar American study by Steiner in 1964¹⁷, an average of only fifteen and a half percent of viewers were found to pay no attention to commercials (see Table 5-3, overleaf).

The Brookings Institution study concluded that there was no obvious best test of how much television advertising substitutes for other media as opposed to how much it adds to total advertising :

TABLE 5-3
ATTENTION OF VIEWERS TO TELEVISION PROGRAMMES
AND COMMERCIALS, 1964 SURVEY*

Level of Attention	Behaviour Just Before Commercial	Behaviour During Commercial
Full	71,0%	48,0%
Partial	21,6%	36,5%
None	7,2%	15,5%
Total	100,0%	100,0%

*The viewer survey was conducted among the families of 325
Chicago-area college students

Source : Adapted from Economic Aspects of Television
Regulation, Noll et al., p. 40.

". . . To estimate this division requires a reasonably accurate specification of the relationship between advertising and sales, which is very difficult to establish because it need have no particular functional form. Certainly income is important in determining responsiveness to advertising, since higher income groups spend much more on discretionary consumer goods, whose purchase is heavily influenced by taste and style. Yet education and security, which also rise with income, probably dampen the effectiveness of advertising "18

By exploring relationships between household characteristics and media advertising expenditures, the Brookings Institution study was able to estimate that nearly half of television advertising in the United States is a net addition to total advertising. The study showed that its estimates were roughly consistent with the effect of the ban on broadcasting cigarette advertising in 1971. Of the \$211 million spent on broadcast cigarette advertising in 1970, about sixty-three percent was shifted to other media in 1971, while thirty-seven percent went to a reduction in total advertising expenditures¹⁹.

In South Africa it is possible to observe television

advertising as a contributor to total advertising in another way. As there is a critical under supply situation brought about by state monopoly and channel limitations, many advertisers have their applications for advertising time allocations rejected or severely reduced by the SABC, which has drawn up a formula with the object of making allocations of this scarce resource in an equitable way. Where funds have been allocated for television advertising and not realised, it is rare for these funds to be diverted to other advertising media.

Dr Jan Swanepoel, former director-general of the SABC, addressing the South African Society of Marketers, said television had boosted the advertising business in South Africa rather than affecting it detrimentally. He claimed that total advertising expenditure before the advent of commercial television in 1978 was relatively static. However, from 1978 advertising grew at an annual rate of twenty-five percent²⁰.

Television's share rose between sixteen and nineteen percent a year. Dr Swanepoel said :

" . . . this made a myth of the accusation that television was solely to blame for the increases in advertising costs of periodicals and their subsequent decrease in circulation because of their higher

retail prices. Increased competition in the media industry had had a stimulating effect on the advertising industry as a whole . . . "21

Critics of media monopolies would be greatly encouraged by these sentiments. They can, too, perhaps be forgiven for wondering whether Dr Swanepoel's stout defence of competition in the media would be proclaimed so lustily had there existed an independent television service competing for advertising alongside the SABC.

5.4 THE ECONOMICS OF NETWORK AND NON-NETWORK PROGRAMMING

The Brookings Institution study, in examining the American television industry's potential for improved performance, concluded that the FCC had contributed to making the networks enormously profitable by shielding them from competition. The study contended that the FCC had failed in its stated goal of increasing local programming through greater use of the ultra high frequency (UHF) band. It had also (according to the study) discouraged the development of new broadcast technologies. The study concluded that the best means of increasing viewer benefit was through a combination of more local stations entering the market and the utilisation of the new technologies²².

The existing South African television system is a centralised one, beaming the same signal nationally with simultaneous receiving in all reception areas. Programming, of necessity, is national and even international in orientation and flavour, the only concession made is to the major languages.

National coverage is the obvious first objective of any country implementing a television service. Ultimately, in the interest of consumer welfare, the broadcasting system expands to cater for the important needs of regionalism and/or localism.

In evaluating the next step in the development of television services for South Africa, an examination of the economics of networking is necessary, assuming the next stage will involve the state and the private sector in the provision of an independent or regional television network based on the major metropolitan centres. The individual stations (television companies) should be inter-connected providing a means of distributing programmes from a central source, either for simultaneous broadcasting in all regions, or for

recording, storage and re-broadcasting, at the discretion of the local station. Advertisers would be able to arrange regional coverage by contracting with the local television company, or national coverage by dealing with the network.

The individual television companies serving the regions would be able to achieve economies through centralised programme procurement for high cost entertainment and information (films, national and international news, sport, etc.), whilst originating a modest range of individual programming to suit regional requirements.

Advertising would range from the sophisticated thirty second live action commercials to simple slide presentations with voice-over commentary lasting for ten seconds, as used in cinemas. Television would cease to be the exclusive preserve of the large national and multinational companies, as thousands of small and medium sized companies and organisations with regional markets shared in the economic benefits of television advertising.

A centralised regulatory body could be named, say, the South African Broadcasting Tribunal (SABT). This state department would be responsible for the regulation and administration of the network, arrangements for the

networking of programmes and advertising, and the awarding of franchises to operate the transmitters to the independent television companies. This arrangement would be similar to the British Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) model, except that in the British case the transmitting facilities are government owned.

If the South African government was reluctant to invest capital in setting up a network of regional transmitters, perhaps preferring to concentrate public expenditure on SABC developments it could, for example, insist that all capital investment for the network should come from the private sector. But if the government, like its British counterpart, should wish to retain ownership of all broadcasting transmitters in a pluralistic system, the development of an independent television network could be held up indefinitely due to low priority in the allocation of public funds.

In considering network and non-network programming in the South African context, it is important to be realistic regarding indigenous programmes. Although an independent television network would encourage 'local' or regional flavoured programmes, their overall contribution in terms of broadcasting hours per regional station would, initially, at any rate, be small. This

highlights a severe problem encountered when examining the state of South African television, namely, the shortage of creative skills in the medium. The SABC, to its credit, sees it to be its duty to initiate a reasonable proportion of home-grown programming.

The corporation would probably admit that this policy has after seven years of television had only limited success. The Afrikaans Service seems to be more consistently successful than the English Service, but the lack of professionalism in programme production, brought about by the lack of skilled and experienced personnel, is a major cause of public criticism.

To expect an independent regional television company to succeed where the might of the SABC has so often failed, may seem unrealistic and it must be said that the quality and public acceptance of much locally initiated programming in countries like Australia, Britain and the United States is still low, leaving advertisers with little option but to try to buy into peak viewing time-slots featuring the hugely popular national and international programme offerings. Few countries, if any, can yet offer the quality and quantity of local television generally thought desirable.

Nevertheless, it is possible that if South Africa had

more television in the form of competition for the SABC on a national (network) and a regional or local level, more good people would be attracted to careers in the industry and standards in domestic programming could be expected to improve considerably. Regardless of quality of programmes, commercial television is a very lucrative business anywhere in the world, because it has the potential to fill the need for mass entertainment, information and education so well.

Assuming the development of an independent television network was officially encouraged in South Africa, subject to suitable controls, it is logical to conclude that professional television personnel from overseas countries would almost certainly be attracted to what they perceived as an industry with good growth and career potential. It goes without saying, that it would not only be the independent television companies that would benefit from this influx. Such stimulation to the industry would also benefit the SABC.

As things stand, the creative and production sectors of the South African television and film industries appear almost static when compared with industry development in other Western countries. Indeed, many media commentators would consider the term 'industry', when applied to South African television, to be something

of a misnomer.

For these reasons, it would be realistic to expect independent television in South Africa to be composed mainly of networked mass-audience entertainment, national and international news, sport and documentaries of general interest. Local or regional programmes will almost certainly be initially restricted perhaps to about fifteen percent of output with the aim of increasing this by about five percent per year, as experience is gained.

Advertising content, on the other hand, could have a large local component from the commencement of the service. The author of this dissertation recommends that local advertisers should receive advantageous treatment from the regional television companies in order to encourage maximum participation.

The American experience with local television demonstrates quite clearly that however noble the vision of decentralisation of programming is, audiences are always attracted to the high budgeted national programmes. Cox and Johnson²³ in their examination of US television

stations, found that local programming accounted for less than twenty percent of prime time and about ten percent of daytime hours. Half the total, and almost all of the prime time local hours was news, weather and sport.

The reason why the welfare concept of localism has only had limited success in the United States is demonstrated by Noll et al.²⁴ :

" . . . It is simply not as profitable for station owners as national programming. A programme of the same quality shown nationally is obviously much cheaper per viewer. A typical half-hour evening network show costs at least \$90 000 (*at 1972 prices**) to produce but, with an average share of the nationwide audience, this amounts to less than one cent per viewing home. At the same cost per viewer, and with the same share of the local audience, the individual station in a market with a million homes can afford only \$1 500 for programme costs - an amount sufficient to produce only a low-quality talk show with minimum salaries for production and performing talent and with guests who are generally volunteers. For the most part the viewing audience prefers highly professional talent - professional

football rather than local high school games, for example. Locally produced programmes, therefore, have low audience ratings, and the advertising revenues are correspondingly low. Consequently, they must operate on very small budgets - which act further to reduce their audiences . . . "25

This same situation is evident regarding local programming in Britain and Australia and is bound to be an important factor in any private sector television enterprise in South Africa. It is therefore probably unrealistic to expect locally produced programmes ever to exceed twenty-five percent of programme content in the South African context. One would expect, however, that South African originated programming, as opposed to imported programming, could quickly rise to around forty percent with the establishment of an independent television network, even though a relatively small component of this was of local or regional flavour.

In Britain, a committee of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) meets on a periodic basis to consider the network part of the programme schedules. The IBA's Director of Television serves on this committee along with the programme controllers of the five network companies and the Director of the Network Programme

Secretariat, representing all fifteen ITV companies. The group puts together the first prototype schedule outline covering three months of broadcasting. This outline is then offered to each of the programme companies as a basic framework on which they can build their own schedules by the addition of their own or acquired material and various embellishments and finishing touches to appeal to their local audiences. Not all the companies accept the basic plan in its entirety every time, preferring to rebuild parts of it to their own specifications.

Two or three months in advance each television company must submit its detailed schedule for the Authority's approval. Each schedule must meet certain established criteria. Informative programmes are expected to occupy at least one-third of the total output. There must be a "proper proportion" of UK and other EEC produced material - this now amounts to at least eighty-six percent, almost all of which is produced in the UK. Only fourteen percent at a maximum may be produced in the US, Commonwealth or other non-EEC countries. There are limits on the number of full-length feature films, and local-interest material must reach certain minimum figures (not specified in IBA literature)²⁶.

Where the Authority feels that a company's proposed

schedule is deficient in some way, discussions take place to see how the pattern can be improved. On the rare occasions when serious differences of opinion arise, it is the Authority which under the terms of the IBA Act has the ultimate responsibility and the final word²⁷.

The IBA claims that three encouraging developments are discernible when examining the development of ITV programming over the years :

- (1) More 'informative' or 'factual' material is being broadcast by the ITV companies. More local news and current affairs programmes are being made by the individual programme companies specially for their own (local and regional) viewers. More network documentary series have also been made.
- (2) Less acquired material is being shown; in particular there are fewer programmes from the US and fewer feature films.
- (3) The source of ITV's own production is widening and more programmes from the larger 'regional' companies are being seen in other part of the country²⁸.

Table 5-4 (overleaf) shows the 1977 - 1980 balance of programming typically offered to the public. Of the 103 hours of programming provided each week by the average ITV company, half are produced by the five network companies (fifty-one hours), about eight hours are networked programmes made by the ten regional companies, about eight hours are purely local programmes and seven hours comprise news material from ITN (the national news company which is owned by all the independent television companies). The remaining twenty-nine hours come from a variety of sources outside the ITV companies.

Factual and informative programmes represent over one-third of ITV company output. About 166 hours of programmes are produced each week in the programme companies' own studios, of which about two-thirds is informative material (see Table 5-5, page 5-33).

Table 5-6 (page 5-34) shows programme content for SABC's dual language TV1 channel. The figures are not strictly comparable with the average ITV company's figures in Table 5-4 owing to time represented and different terminology and categories of programme type. Nevertheless, certain similarity of pattern seems to be present in drama, news, youth and children's programmes. It must also be borne in mind that the

TABLE 5-4

WEEKLY TRANSMISSION HOURS OF THE AVERAGE ITV COMPANY

	1977-78 hrs.mins		1978-79 hrs.mins		1979-80 hrs.mins	
News and news magazines	10.23	10%	10.27	10½%	10.42	10½%
Current affairs, documentaries, arts	12.20	12%	13.17	13%	13.04	12¾%
Religion	2.50	3%	2.24	2½%	2.28	2½%
Adult education	3.08	3%	3.07	3%	2.52	2¾%
School programmes	6.29	6½%	6.11	6¼%	6.24	6¼%
Pre-school education	1.27	1½%	1.27	1½%	1.16	1¼%
Children's informative	2.06	2%	2.10	2%	2.19	2¼%
' INFORMATIVE '	38.43	38%	39.03	38¾%	39.05	38%
Plays, drama, TV movies	24.12	24%	22.54	22¾%	25.35	24¾%
Feature films	8.27	8%	8.00	8%	8.27	8¼%
' NARRATIVE '	32.39	32%	30.54	30¾%	34.02	33%
Children's non-factual	8.17	8%	7.57	8%	7.32	7¼%
Entertainment and music	13.19	13%	12.13	12%	13.30	13¼%
' ENTERTAINMENT '	21.36	21%	20.10	20%	21.02	20½%
' SPORT '	9.27	9%	10.34	10½%	8.28	8¼%
TOTAL ALL PROGRAMMES	102.25	100%	100.41	100%	102.53	100%

Miscellaneous transmissions account for an additional
16 minutes included in the total for 1979-80

Source : Television and Radio 1981 IBA, London : 1981.

TABLE 5-5

TRANSMISSION Weekly average transmission in typical ITV area		PRODUCTION IN ITV STUDIOS Weekly average	
SPORT	INFORMATIVE	SPORT	INFORMATIVE
FILMS		ENTERTAINMENT, MUSIC	
ENTERTAINMENT, MUSIC		PLAYS, SERIES, SERIALS	
PLAYS, SERIES, SERIALS		CHILDREN	
CHILDREN		EDUCATION	
EDUCATION		RELIGION	
RELIGION		CURRENT AFFAIRS, DOCUMENTARIES	
CURRENT AFFAIRS, DOCUMENTARIES		NEWS, NEWS MAGAZINES	
NEWS, NEWS MAGAZINES			

Source : Television and Radio 1981 IBA, London : 1981

TABLE 5-6SABC'S TV1 AFRIKAANS & ENGLISH SERVICESProgramme Content Percentages(Figures in brackets are the 1981 percentages)

<u>Programme Type</u>	<u>Afrikaans</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Both</u>
Drama	29,5 (30,0)	29,5 (31,0)	29,5 (30,5)
Sport	15,0 (11,0)	17,0 (13,5)	16,0 (12,25)
News	12,0 (11,0)	11,0 (11,0)	11,5 (11,0)
Youth & Children	10,5 (8,5)	8,5 (7,0)	9,5 (7,25)
Variety	6,0 (8,0)	10,0 (9,0)	8,0 (8,5)
Advertisements	6,5 (6,5)	6,5 (6,0)	6,5 (6,25)
Magazine	5,0 (5,0)	7,0 (7,0)	6,0 (6,0)
Documentary	5,5 (9,0)	3,5 (6,5)	4,5 (7,75)
Religious	4,5 (4,0)	4,0 (3,5)	4,25 (3,75)
Serious Music	4,1 (4,0)	1,5 (2,5)	2,75 (3,25)
Weather & Presentation	1,5 (3,0)	1,5 (3,0)	1,5 (3,0)
	<u>100,0%</u>	<u>100,0%</u>	<u>100,0%</u>

Source : SABC Annual Report, 1982.

average ITV company broadcasts over one hundred hours of programming per week, almost twice that of SABC's TV1 channel. The other major difference is the approximately thirteen percent of programme time devoted to various types of educational broadcasting by the ITV companies. The SABC intends to begin educational television in 1984.

Tables 5-7 to 5-9 (pages 5-36 to 5-38 respectively) provide statistics on TV1's local content percent for 1982 (figures in brackets are the 1981 percentages) and the time allocated to TV1 broadcasting.

5.5 LOCALISM IN TELEVISION - MYTH OR REALITY?

The objectives sought for localism in broadcasting are summed up in a statement by Cox and Johnson²⁹ in discussing American television structures :

" . . . A system of locally based stations was deemed necessary to ensure that broadcasting would be attentive to the specific needs and interests of each local community. It was also considered a guarantee to local groups and leaders that they would have adequate opportunity for expression

TABLE 5-7AVERAGE LOCAL CONTENT PERCENTAGES(Figures in Brackets are the 1981 Percentages)

<u>Programme Type</u>	<u>Afrikaans</u>		<u>English</u>	
Drama	16,0	(16,7)	14,5	(13,7)
Documentary	38,4	(19,4)	59,3	(18,8)
Magazine	99,1	(98,5)	90,9	(76,7)
Youth and Children	48,1	(54,7)	41,0	(42,0)
Variety	78,0	(63,4)	57,3	(57,8)
Sport	88,7	(92,1)	71,3	(62,0)
Serious Music	77,2	(42,1)	37,2	(18,8)
Religious	93,8	(96,3)	96,0	(96,8)
Weather	100,0	(100,0)	100,0	(100,0)

Source : SABC Annual Report, 1982, p.54.

TABLE 5-8AVERAGE LOCAL CONTENT PERCENTAGE PER SERVICE

	<u>Afrikaans</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Both</u>
Programmes Only	52,9 (46,8)	48,9 (39,5)	50,9 (43,3)
Including News & Presentation	59,7 (54,6)	56,0 (48,3)	57,8 (51,5)
Including Advertisements (Total Time Transmitted)	62,4 (57,5)	58,8 (51,5)	60,6 (54,5)

Source : SABC Annual Report, 1982, p.54.

TABLE 5-9TIME ALLOCATED TO TV1 BROADCASTING

	<u>Afrikaans</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Both</u>
Total Hours Transmitted	1 216	1 256	2 472
Programmes Only	972	1 012	1 984
Local Content	514 (52,9%)	495 (48,9%)	1 009 (50,9%)

Source : SABC Annual Report, 1982, p.54.

. . . Ultimately, our broadcasting system is premised on concern that the very identity of local states and cities might be destroyed by a mass communications system with an exclusively national focus . . . " ³⁰

A fundamental tenet of this dissertation is the premise that some localism in television broadcasting is a worthy objective and the needs and interests of local, regional and national communities should form a high priority in examining new proposals for alternative television in South Africa.

Confirmation of this concept is obtained from an opinion survey carried out by the Department of Business Science at the University of Cape Town in 1982, where viewer opinion appeared to confirm this need³¹ (see Chapter 8, South African Opinions and the Television Debate).

In Britain, Australia and the United States, television regulation is designed to promote the principle of localism and discourage television systems with an exclusively national focus.

In reality, the situation is very different in all of these countries, where programming seldom reflects anything more than national and international fare.

In the United States, the network affiliates, which constitute the vast majority of VHF stations, rely on the network for eighty-two percent of their prime-time programming. Of the remaining eighteen percent, a high proportion is devoted to non-network films and other national programming. Outside of prime time, the reliance is less but the pattern is much the same. Few local programmes other than local news, weather and sport are offered³².

The American independent stations are much the same, broadcasting mainly new or rerun syndications and movies and many, particularly in the UHF band, go off the air in the daytime and late evening rather than broadcast local programmes³³.

The other rationale for local television stations is that they serve as an effective advertising medium for local industry. The Cox and Johnson study showed that here the rule of localism is somewhat more important but it pointed out that broadcasters still earn eighty percent of their revenue from either network or spot messages of national advertisers³⁴. This is almost certainly true of other countries offering national and regional television coverage. The reason is fairly obvious. The large national advertisers have large investments in television advertising. They spend

huge sums on the production and exposure of their commercials. They also appreciate the benefits of marketing techniques such as market segmentation, so they are constantly looking for exposure through a combination of national and regional media.

In a South African scenario, one could expect the same situation. For this reason, it would be desirable to afford a measure of protection to local advertisers and those with relatively small turnovers. The easiest form of protectionism would be through the pricing mechanism, with preferential rates for local advertisers as practised by the British independent television system.

5.6 DEFINING THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Many economists, sociologists and media commentators support the premise that localism in television broadcasting serves the public interest. Research carried out by the Department of Business Science at the University of Cape Town (see Chapter 8, South African Opinion and the Television Debate) among opinion leaders and the general public endorsed this view. However, where viewers are able to exercise programme choice, their actual behaviour shows that national programming

is the clear favourite by a considerable margin.

Because local programming is seen to be in the public interest, there is considerable concern that viewers often reject it in favour of national programming. The Cox and Johnson Report had this to say :

"The greatest challenge before the American people today is the challenge of restoring and reinvigorating local democracy. That challenge cannot be met without a working system of local broadcast media actively serving the needs of each community for information about its affairs, serving the interests of all members of the community, and allowing all to confront the listening public with their problems and their proposals."³⁵

An effective way for broadcast regulatory bodies to ensure that large proportions of the population watch local programming would be to insist that competing channels set aside time during peak viewing hours in which all channels must carry local programming.

This autocratic approach by regulators would be seen by the viewing public as an attempt to dictate viewing patterns. In the South African context it would probably be seen as a restrictive measure almost as unpopular as monopoly broadcasting. In any case, the

dictatorial powers of regulating authorities have already been considerably weakened by technological advances such as video and cable developments which do not lend themselves easily to restrictive legislation. In order to compete with these innovations, conventional broadcasting corporations and authorities will be forced to defer more to consumer sovereignty considerations. In other words, they will, to a much larger degree, give viewers what they want. In the South African situation this will almost certainly mean much greater emphasis on entertainment of international standard, with some measure of local content to serve community needs.

5.7 REGULATION OF INDEPENDENT TELEVISION

Government regulation of the broadcast media has always been an area of heated controversy and deep conflict. In South Africa broadcast regulation, like so much else, has strong political connotations. In countries like Britain, Australia and the United States politics too are a factor, but the real conflict is between the government and the organisations licensed to broadcast. A great deal of the debate in these and other countries centres around the issues of public access to the media and the accountability of the media to the public.

In comparing different regulatory systems for broadcasting one is struck by the apparent indifference, comparatively speaking, with these issues on the part of the South African public : a passivity which might be construed as acquiescence, or even resignation.

Regulation of television broadcasting in South Africa is governed by the Broadcasting Act No. 73 of 1976 amended by the Broadcasting Amendment Act, No. 61 of 1982.

This legislation provides the framework within which the SABC operates, as well as stipulating the responsibilities, duties and composition of the corporation's Board.

The Act confers upon the SABC broadcasting rights anywhere within the Republic and certain countries or territories outside the Republic. Due regard to the interests of the English, Afrikaans and Black cultures must be evident in programming policy.

The general powers of the SABC conferred by the Act include :

- erecting broadcasting stations
- entering into agreements on the supplying of

programmes, news, etc.

- canvassing and broadcasting advertisements, subject to the approval of the Minister* in accordance with conditions and requirements determined by him³⁶.

Regulation of South African broadcasting still bears a resemblance to the British system on which it was modelled. Although British broadcasting had changed dramatically since 1954 when Independent (commercial) Television was established, the original control mechanism is still basically the same. The Home Secretary is responsible to Parliament for the proper functioning of the BBC and the IBA.

The structure has remained flexible enough to adapt to the arrival of the IBA's and BBC's regional radio networks, and a fourth television channel, awarded to the IBA. It is expected that the system will also incorporate the control of three satellite television channels expected to be operated jointly by the BBC and the IBA from 1988³⁷. The regulatory mechanism is currently being reviewed in order to accommodate cable television, now that the Hunt Report recommendations are to be implemented³⁸.

*'Minister' means, at the present time, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Although the regulatory mechanisms for broadcasting in South Africa and Britain are similar in many respects, the BBC and the IBA undoubtedly enjoy in practice far greater operational autonomy than does the SABC. The British government is always reluctant to interfere in programme matters for fear of weakening the broadcasting system, but there is a case on record where a former Director-General of the BBC, Sir Hugh Greene, was threatened with the ultimate deterrents of forbidding a programme transmission or of refusing to grant a change in the licence fee³⁹. (It must be remembered that unlike the SABC, the BBC is non-commercial, in that it does not broadcast advertisements and is thus totally dependent upon licence fees and government grants for its income.)

The top level of management of the BBC take the line that they are prepared to stand up to government pressure because what really matters is 'what the programme makers feel'⁴⁰. Even so, members of the Association of Directors and Producers are also on record as saying that

" . . . the BBC had failed dismally to resist pressure . . . and was the primary target for politicians because it was the softer target"⁴¹.

Naturally this was not the view of many politicians, because just as in South Africa, many resented the fact that they could not more easily get access to the electronic media.

The Independent Television Companies Association (ITCA), the body representing the interests of the IBA's franchised television companies, took the view that :

"if the Minister responsible for the financing of broadcasting was responsible for the health and standard of broadcasting, he could not represent the views of the government either on programmes or on the way in which a particular part of one of the broadcasting organisations was operating"⁴².

Lord Annan's Committee on the Future of Broadcasting (1977) concluded that

"in the last resort, the government, not the broadcasters must make decisions about national security"⁴³.

Significantly, the committee also concluded that the power of the Minister to veto the transmission of a programme gave the broadcasters greater security from undue pressure than they would have it if were removed :

" . . . in the last analysis, the government alone can judge and decide whether a programme (such as The Question of Ulster), constitutes a threat to national security, or is likely to lead to riots or other grave disorder. If that responsibility is taken from the government, it must be transferred to the Broadcasting Authorities : and how much easier it will be for a Minister to paint a picture of the devastating consequences, and how much more difficult for the Authority to stand out against his judgement. In the present system a Minister can state his grave objections : the Broadcasting Authority can then reject these objections and can inform the Minister that under his powers he is at liberty to ban the programme : but if he does, they will tell the public that he has done so. We believe that this is the best way of reconciling the freedom of the broadcasters with the legitimate concern of the government and of placing the responsibility for prohibiting programmes in the national interest precisely where it belongs . . . we recommend that the government's power of veto should be retained." ⁴⁴

In considering regulation for an independent television system for South Africa, due regard needs to be paid

to existing legislation and control governing the operation and continued operation of the SABC.

Additional regulation would, therefore, have to be compatible with the existing regulatory framework so that the SABC and the new independent system were subject to basically the same controls and thus shared similar definitions of broadcasting, in the public interest.

The following reports and publications have served as the basis for analysis in considering the major features of a regulatory framework which should permit the SABC and an independent television network to co-exist :

- (1) The Broadcasting Act No. 73 of 1976, Statutes of the Republic of South Africa.
- (2) The Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, 1977 (UK).
- (3) The Federal Communications Commission, various publications (US).
- (4) The Australian Broadcasting and Television Act, 1942, amended to 1979.
- (5) The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Annual Report, 1980 - 1981.
- (6) Self-Regulation for Broadcasters : Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, 1977.
- (7) Television Programme Standards : Australian

Broadcasting Control Board, 1981.

- (8) Government White Paper on Broadcasting, 1978
(UK).

From a synthesis of the above references, and bearing in mind the characteristics and special requirements of television broadcasting in South Africa, a number of recommendations were formulated :

- (1) South African broadcasting services should continue as public services and should continue to be the responsibility of public authorities. Both the SABC and any additional independent broadcasting organisation should be independent of Government in their day-to-day operations. The broadcasting authorities would be responsible for programme content and ensuring that the services are conducted in the general public interest, in accordance with the requirements and objectives laid down by Parliament.
- (2) The broadcasting authorities should prepare annual reports on their services and activities for presentation to Parliament, as is current practice with the SABC.
- (3) A Broadcasting Complaints Commission should be

established to consider complaints against the broadcasting authorities of misrepresentation or unjust or unfair treatment in broadcast programmes. This body should work closely with the proposed new Media Council, the independent self-regulatory body formed by initiatives from South Africa's NPU as a consequence of the Report of the Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media, 1981.

- (4) Whenever an authority has a responsibility for allocating broadcasting franchises (as could be the case with the implementation of an independent regional or local television network for South Africa) a public hearing should form part of the normal procedure for awarding contracts. The hearing should also take place in the area in which the franchise will be held.
- (5) The present powers of Government over programming (to prescribe the hours of broadcasting, to require the broadcasting of announcements or any other matter in an emergency, to veto any particular broadcast and to prevent the making of exclusive arrangements for the broadcasting of sporting or other events of national interest) should be retained or acquired.

- (6) The Board of the SABC and members of an additional Broadcasting Tribunal (to be styled 'Independent' or 'Regional') should continue to be appointed by the State President.
- (7) The SABC should continue to be the main national instrument of broadcasting in the Republic.
- (8) The SABC should continue to be financed from the revenue of television receiver licences, plus advertising revenue, for which it would have to compete with the proposed regional television companies. Because of its special responsibility as the main national instrument of broadcasting, the SABC should be permitted to retain the income from receiver licences, exclusively.
- (9) The Independent Television Tribunal should be responsible for a single service, serving the needs of the major population centres. It should also be capable of networking programmes nationally. The service should be provided by regionally based private sector companies under contract to the Tribunal.

Assuming a state body such as an Independent Television Tribunal is created to be responsible for an independent television service for the Republic, operating state-owned transmitting facilities, a method of funding such an organisation will need to be found. The British IBA system, whereby rentals are paid to the IBA for use of the state-owned broadcasting facilities by the programme companies, appears to solve this problem. Furthermore, the television companies are called upon to make an additional payment via the IBA into the Exchequer. This takes the form of a 'levy' on advertising revenue.

When this levy was first introduced in 1963, after a storm of criticism regarding the high profits being made by many of the television companies, it was a flat rate charge on television advertisements. This proved unsatisfactory as it left the larger companies with what are still considered by Parliament to be 'excessive' profits but penalised the smaller regional companies. The flat rate was therefore changed to a sliding scale on advertising receipts, and this proved to be more flexible. The rates were changed three times after they were first introduced, as shown in Table 5-10 (overleaf).

TABLE 5-10
IBA LEVY RATES 1964 - 1974

<u>Effective Dates</u>	<u>Net Advertising Revenue</u> (£ Million)	<u>Rate of Levy</u> (%)
1. 1964 to 1st July 1969	0 - 1½	Nil
	1½ - 7½	25
	Over 7½	45
2. 1st July 1969 - April 1970	0 - ½	Nil
	½ - 1½	7
	1½ - 4	25
	4 - 10	35
	Over 10	47½
3. April 1970 - 26th Feb. 1971	0 - 2	Nil
	2 - 6	20
	6 - 9	35
	9 - 12	40
	12 - 16	45
	Over 16	50
4. 26th February 1971 - 23rd June 1974	0 - 2	Nil
	2 - 6	10
	6 - 9	17½
	9 - 12	20
	12 - 16	22½
	Over 16	25

Source : Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting,
1977, pp.176-177.

It seems reasonable to assume that such a system, combining rentals for use of state-owned facilities with a levy on advertising revenue, could be readily adapted to fund a South African Broadcasting Tribunal.

- (10) The practice in the United States and Australia where it is common to find press interests owning or controlling television companies, is not thought to be a good model for South Africa (*as, in the view of the author, it could work against the public interest in that one type of monopoly is merely replaced by another. Cross-ownership of media is now carefully regulated by broadcasting authorities in many countries because of possible monopoly implications.**) It is considered important, however, that the South African press be permitted to diversify into the electronic media, particularly television, as this represents a logical development for communication specialists. This need was recognised by the Annan Committee which, in the light of British experience, considered it to be undesirable for any newspaper to have more than ten percent voting shares in

*Author's italics

any television company and for the total press interest in any company to be more than twenty-five percent ⁴⁵.

In considering press participation in regional television company ownership in South Africa, particular attention should be given to the aggregate holding of any one press interest in the total broadcasting system.

Foreign investment in South African television companies will also need strict controls.

There is certain to be intense pressure to resist foreign holdings and statutory provision will have to be made for this.

- (11) The present basic statutory requirements on broadcast advertising should be retained, but the current SABC practice of no programme interruptions should be reviewed as there are possible disadvantages to both viewers and advertisers with the present system.

A number of countries with considerably more television experience than South Africa, are seeking tighter control over advertising targeted to children. Many are reviewing the

policy of advertising in children's programmes and the British inquiry into broadcasting led by Lord Annan, recommended that advertisements promoting products or services of particular interest to children should not be shown before 9.00 p.m.⁴⁶.

- (12) The broadcasting authorities should ensure that an adequate proportion of the programmes on their services are of South African origin, with a view to increasing this local content as the services become more established.
- (13) The broadcasting authorities should monitor the amount of violence in their programmes and should regularly publish their findings.

The SABC and any new broadcasting entrant, should continue to operate a policy of not showing television programmes which may be unsuitable for children, during the early evening.

- (14) The broadcasting authorities should, as far as possible, treat controversial subjects with due impartiality, but this should not preclude committed public affairs programmes from having a recognised place on television.

- (15) The major political parties should, as far as possible, be given equal exposure.
- (16) Although the main thrust of educational broadcasting should be the responsibility of the SABC, an additional independent television service would be expected to make a positive contribution in this area. An Independent Broadcasting Tribunal would be responsible for ensuring that franchisees met their educational broadcasting obligations.

The broadcasting authorities would be responsible for the co-ordination of educational programming, with the SABC having overall responsibility.

The broadcasting organisations and the educational authorities should devise research projects to test the effectiveness of structured educational programmes.

- (17) The broadcasting authorities should not duplicate the broadcasting of the same event thereby wasting scarce resources and reducing viewer choice. They should agree to share the coverage of such events.

In the present circumstances and for the foreseeable future, the South African broadcasting authorities should make provision for programmes introducing immigrants to their new country. There should also be programmes on the cultures of the immigrants which would enable South Africans to understand and appreciate these cultures. The Australian Channel 0/28 is an excellent example of this endeavour (see Chapter 9, The Aspects of Overseas Television Systems of Possible Relevance to Future Developments in South Africa).

In framing regulatory requirements for future South African broadcasting developments, one is struck by the growing emphasis being placed in other Western countries on the accountability of the broadcasting authorities. The spotlight falls on the Government's powers and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities of the broadcasting organisations.

South Africans can be judged fortunate in that the Republic can draw on the vast experience accumulated abroad with television regulation, in formulating future broadcasting plans. The policymakers could do worse than to heed Anthony Smith when he said :

" . . . A broadcasting industry is healthy only when it is free to

hold discourse with its society and
when that society is free to influence
it, to criticize it and to be
challenged and at times affronted by
it . . . "47.

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CHAPTER 6SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF ADVERTISING

Advertising services contributed sixty-two percent to the SABC's total revenue of R316,4 million in 1983. Television advertising is now established as the corporation's single largest source of income, generating revenue of R141,6 million (forty-five percent of total revenue) in 1983¹.

It is difficult to obtain accurate estimates of the extent to which SABC-TV is oversubscribed but officials have admitted to an undersupply situation of at least one hundred percent for TV1. Other South African media commentators place oversubscription as high as two hundred percent and higher.

This is an important economic consideration in contemplating new television entries to the market.

An independent network capable of regional coverage would quite obviously soak up much of this advertising but would in addition, generate considerably more additional advertising from small and medium sized companies which cannot afford the cost of existing

national television exposure.

Using the only available published source for international comparisons, South Africa is seen to spend considerably less on all forms of advertising when compared with other Western countries. Table 6-1 (overleaf) shows an underestimated figure of \$342 million for 1981 advertising expenditure (\$13,11 per capita) to be by far the highest in Africa, but compared with some Western European countries, South Africa's total expenditure exceeds that of Norway (\$291 million), Belgium (\$294 million), Ireland (\$60 million), Portugal (\$69 million), Greece (\$62 million) and Turkey (\$254 million). Using the better criterion of per capita expenditure, South Africa is seen, at \$13,11 to be ahead of Italy (\$10,69), Portugal (\$7,24), Greece (\$6,7) and Turkey (\$6,32).

Using advertising expenditure as a measure of economic activity, it can be seen that although South Africa is ranked higher than the conventionally defined 'poor and developing' countries, it still has considerable ground to make up before it comes up to the levels of the more industrialised economies.

Another method of evaluating the importance of advertising to a country's economy is to relate advertising expenditures to the gross national product (G.N.P.).

Table 6-2 (page 6-4) shows how South Africa compares with

TABLE 6-1
GLOBAL ADVERTISING EXPENDITURES (\$)

Country	Total (in millions)	Per capita	Country	Total (in millions)	Per capita
Western Europe			South Asia		
Switzerland	702	109.59	Iran	54	1.58
Denmark	507	99.41	Sri Lanka	5	0.33
Sweden	753	91.81	India	138	0.23
Finland	386	82.19	Pakistan	15	0.20
Netherlands	1,122	81.28	Bangladesh	—	0.13
Norway	291	72.73	Nepal	1	0.05
Austria	421	56.13	Afghanistan	—	—
West Germany	2,986	48.56	Bhutan	—	—
France	2,502	47.31	Southeast Asia		
United Kingdom	2,250	40.25	Singapore	51	22.04
Spain	1,322	36.73	Hong Kong	88	20.00
Iceland	—	35.50	Taiwan	169	10.36
Belgium	294	29.73	Malaysia	42	3.42
Luxembourg	11	28.25	Thailand	131	3.04
Ireland	60	18.69	Philippines	59	1.35
Italy	601	10.69	Indonesia	64	0.45
Malta	3	8.00	Australasia		
Portugal	69	7.24	Australia	1,116	82.06
Greece	62	6.70	New Zealand	122	39.52
Turkey	254	6.32	South America		
Africa			Venezuela	240	19.36
South Africa	342	13.11	Argentina	432	16.80
Libya	—	4.36	Brazil	1,260	11.54
Rhodesia	—	2.79	Peru	95	5.89
Zambia	11	2.24	Chile	57	5.44
Mauritius	2	1.89	Uruguay	—	5.07
Egypt	58	1.52	Ecuador	35	4.78
Sudan	—	0.95	Colombia	93	3.79
Kenya	13	0.93	Surinam	2	3.75
Nigeria	53	0.82	Bolivia	—	1.79
Morocco	—	0.71	Paraguay	—	1.30
Liberia	1	0.39	Central America		
Ghana	3	0.25	Bermuda	7	110.00
Ethiopia	1	0.03	Puerto Rico	96	30.09
Middle East			Jamaica	36	17.24
Bahrain	12	41.00	Costa Rica	20	9.95
Kuwait	18	17.70	Trinidad & Tobago	11	9.91
Israel	58	16.74	Mexico	480	7.71
Lebanon	35	11.63	Panama	13	7.47
Saudi Arabia	89	9.63	Dominican Republic	31	6.38
Syria	21	2.72	Nicaragua	—	2.50
Jordan	—	2.46	Guatemala	—	1.95
Iraq	—	1.70	El Salvador	—	1.20
UAE	—	—	Honduras	—	1.03
North America			Northeast Asia		
United States	54,600	156.69	Japan	4,856	43.05
Canada	2,378	103.40	Korea	187	5.21

Source : BOVÉE C.L. & ARENS W.F. Contemporary Advertising
 Richard D. Irwin, Homewood, Illinois : 1982, p.30

TABLE 6-2ADVERTISING AS A PERCENTAGE OF GNP (1980)

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>%</u>
1.	United States	1,60
2.	Australia	1,48
3.	New Zealand	1,37
4.	United Kingdom	1,34
5.	Chile	1,15
6.	Canada	1,00
7.	Japan	0,97
8.	Brazil	0,95
9.	Venezuela	0,73
10.	W. Germany	0,64
11.	Belgium	0,59
12.	South Africa	0,58 (0,8 for 1983)
13.	Spain	0,54
14.	France	0,51
15.	Central America	0,49
16.	Austria	0,47
17.	Malaysia	0,46
18.	Peru	0,43
19.	Sweden	0,42
20.	Italy	0,36

Source : Management, September 1982, p.17

a number of other countries in this regard.

An examination of the American experience of advertising and G.N.P. shows that prior to 1940, the level of investment in advertising averaged close to three percent of G.N.P. During World War II with its shortages of consumer goods, the ratio fell to slightly over one percent. The figure now stands at an even two percent. Products are apparently being sold in the United States today with relatively less advertising support than in the 1930's. Rising costs of advertising may be one factor, as well as greater efficiency of advertising. Furthermore, the character of the G.N.P. has changed and now has a substantial governmental segment and a very high service industry quotient, neither of which is as advertisable as the traditional components of G.N.P.².

Advertising in America is seen by Wright et al. as representing a declining part of the consumer sector of the economy. Advertising-to-sales ratios are diminishing for national manufacturing companies, especially in the packaged goods field. Leo Bogart, a leading American advertising commentator believes that :

"this may reflect the fact that we are

approaching the limits of consumers' capacity to absorb additional advertising communication"

and that :

"it may mean a shift in the balance of advertising and other forms of sales promotion".³

6.1 MORALITY AND CRITICISM OF ADVERTISING

Supporters of advertising's social and economic role constantly use high advertising expenditure, usually expressed as a percentage of G.N.P. or in per capita terms, as indicators of the range of economic choices available to consumers. They also argue that where advertising expenditures per capita are very low, media freedom of expression is threatened. The views expressed by Tom Dillon, Chairman of BBDO, in an address in 1963, are still the basic arguments supported by the US advertising industry :

". . . some countries like Great Britain and Canada have advertising operations very much like our own, but there are other countries where advertising expenditures per capita are very low. There you will find the freedom of the press tends to be a fiction . . .

radio and television must be supported by the state, and they become the official propaganda organs of the party in power. Indeed the last thing that these parties want to see is commercial television. For commercial television is free-speech television . . . And what happens to newspapers? . . . in the majority of cases, because circulation revenue can't possibly support them, these newspapers are official organs of various political parties and get their revenues from party funds the fact of the matter is that, in the absence of advertising revenue, the concept of freedom of the press is a joke . . .

. . . Without the financial support of advertising, not only would there be no practical freedom of economic choice, but there is also a very serious question whether there would be any practical freedom in politics and religion . . . "4

That advertising contributes to economic welfare and benefits society is not nearly as well documented as the reverse argument. The phenomenal growth of the consumerism movement, particularly in the United States, can, in some measure, be attributed to advertising's excesses. Fraudulent and misleading advertising has become the target of informed and fearless exposure.

Television in Britain and America is making superstars out of consumer watchdogs as the networks realise the tremendous audience appeal that consumer protection programme formats offer⁵.

American public concern regarding television advertising is also reflected in the fact that an organisation called Action for Children's Television, started by a group of concerned parents and now a nationwide body, has called for the barring of all advertisements aimed at children under the age of twelve. Their concern is that commercials for food, toys and other items aimed at children under high school age are inherently deceptive because they claim, at that age viewers do not understand their purpose. Most attention in recent years has been paid to food commercials because they allegedly encourage bad eating habits, harming children's health. Advertisements for products high in sugar content have drawn most of the public criticism.

The television networks naturally oppose a total ban. They argue that a ban would reduce their revenues, and thus the amount of money available for producing better programmes for children. At least one network, ABC, has voluntarily limited the number of advertisements aimed at children. Another network, NBC, indicating sensitivity to the subject, has been running brief

announcements during peak children's viewing hours, encouraging them to eat properly.

American children between the ages of two and twelve years watch an average of 20 000 television commercials a year, or fifty to fifty-five on a typical day⁶.

Television advertising has been the catalyst for forcing an examination of the societal aspects of advertising, although the economic and aesthetic aspects of advertising have been the subject of debate and controversy for many decades. Advertisers are accused of creating dissatisfaction with the status quo. They portray fantasy images to the young and the less affluent segments of society. Because advertising is seldom truly selective, the less affluent sections of society, e.g. South Africa's Black population, are exposed to images of lifestyles that many cannot even hope to aspire to. The resulting frustrations are believed to have a social price. Heilbroner⁷, commenting on the phenomenon of advertising, states :

" . . . But is not advertising also testimony to the changing character of consumer wants? In the nineteenth century, those wants were basically focused on the basic requirements of simple existence : food, clothing, shelter. In the rich nations of the

mid-twentieth century, however, these basic wants have been largely satisfied. Consumer demand is no longer driven to essentials, but hesitates before a whole range of possible luxuries and semi-luxuries.

Thus the fact that producers can manipulate and create these wants testifies to the much more important fact that the wants themselves are now amorphous and vague and susceptible to influence. Curiously, then, we can view the rise of advertising as an attempt to introduce orderliness and intensity of demand into a society where purely spontaneous demand would no longer firmly indicate which patterns of economic activity producers should follow . . . ".⁸

Heilbroner's thinking may offer a possible explanation of advertising in advanced economies like those of the United States and Western Europe, but the 'goodness of fit' can be seriously questioned when applied to developing and mixed economies like South Africa's, where the vast proportion of the population is still pursuing the basic requirements of simple existence.

Galbraith's view is rather similar to that of Heilbroner when he states :

" . . . the social difficulty in which advertising finds itself is that while a shop-window presents goods for sale, the shop-window of advertising presents 'satisfactions' to buy. This indeed is far more helpful to the public who do not buy 'things' but the satisfactions - the utility, the pleasure, the prestige, the performance - delivered by those things. Things are objective and unarguable, but satisfactions, with their subjective implications, are different for different people . . . we are in the realm of ethical and social prejudices and judgements and the intellectuals and the elders tend to have different views from the masses and the younger . . . " ⁹.

Hobson comments that whatever satisfaction it portrays, advertising is certain to be in trouble with somebody, and because it is, by its nature, obtrusive and ubiquitous, it tends to attract to itself the blame for all the conflicts of modern society ¹⁰.

Advertising is frequently accused of debasing culture. Wright et al. ask how realistic is it to assume that advertising has a responsibility to raise or even maintain cultural standards, pointing out that the function of advertising is to persuade : "In attempting to persuade some, it is almost sure to offend others" ¹¹.

A major cultural criticism, previously discussed in Chapter 4, relates to advertising supported mass appeal information and entertainment provided by the mass media, particularly television. Although popular 'low-brow' fare is often preferred to the more aesthetic and culturally significant type of offering, it is possible to go too far in criticising the mass media for giving the public what it obviously desires and enjoys. The important factor is that it is only through advertising that the consumer can benefit from choice, be it in newspapers or television channels. X

As advertising has proliferated in the media, the criticism of advertising in South Africa has also intensified. Detractors claim that the Afrikaans and English languages and cultures are being debased. They argue that advertising's mass promotion of a materialistic society leaves the majority of Blacks and the less affluent feeling helpless and frustrated. Some religious leaders, educationalists and community leaders are convinced that advertising manipulates people unethically. Other South Africans claim that advertising is not only excessive but also offensive and in bad taste. /

The traditional defence of advertising is the claim that it is misused and its manipulative power in society

is often exaggerated. However, such is the force of the criticism that a large body of legislation and other control mechanisms has emerged to ensure that the South African advertising industry takes a more responsible and professional stance. Regulation has come in a number of forms : voluntary self-regulation by advertisers; regulation by the advertising agencies and the media; government regulation in the form of legislation designed to protect consumers; self-regulation by industrial associations and a keener sense of South African societal problems by the business community; and the emergence of South African consumer protection organisations such as the Consumer Council. Certainly, the image of South African advertising is a prime issue with professional and business organisations such as the South African Society of Marketers, the Association of Accredited Practitioners in Advertising (AAPA), the Newspaper Press Union (NPU) and the SABC. With all sectors of South African advertising actively supporting a more responsible and professional approach to advertising, one can expect to see the modest but impressive efforts of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to involve the South African public in reporting untruthful, misleading and offensive advertising bearing fruit. The result is that the traditional social criticisms of advertising are, at least, being re-examined in a more informed way

(see Appendix C, Examples of Advertisements for the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) Appealing to the South African Public to Become Involved in Improving Advertising Content).

6.2 SOCIAL USES OF ADVERTISING

The major source of criticism regarding advertising is centred on commercial campaigns for fast moving consumer goods and also consumer durables. In countries like Britain and the United States ever increasing amounts of money are being invested in public service uses of advertising.

The Advertising Council in the United States is a private, non-profit organisation which conducts public service advertising campaigns in the public interest. In 1979 it received free space and time by US media to the value of \$600 million, making it the largest single advertiser in the United States.

It is argued that in South Africa a high proportion of newspaper advertising space is devoted to the recruitment of personnel, fulfilling a definite social need as far as job seekers are concerned.

Recruitment advertising in the Republic is becoming highly specialised with a number of recruitment service agencies developing out of conventional advertising agencies. South Africa has also witnessed the establishment of the large international advertising agencies, specialising solely in recruitment.

Supporters of advertising would further argue that classified advertising overall fulfils a useful social function with only a comparatively small proportion being purely commercial or of little social use. Essential public services such as teaching, hospitals, police, local government, etc. all rely heavily on advertising.

Advertising also permits individuals and organisations to state their views on particular issues that concern them. It may be an industry, or a university appealing against intended government legislation, or a statement from a political party.

Providing the message is considered not to offend against good taste and decency, the South African press is free to carry virtually any advertisement. In the case of the state controlled broadcasting service, the SABC, restrictions on advertising are more severe. The SABC has its own stringent code and advertising clearing

system whereby all advertisements are scrutinised and no advertisement that is deemed to be of a political or religious nature is permitted. In this and other regards, the SABC's code is similar to that of Britain's Independent Broadcasting Authority's Code of Advertising Standards and Practice.

Advertising can provide a freedom from interference with a particular message which cannot always be counted on in editorial columns. At the national level press advertising can be prohibitive to all but the large organisations, but South Africa's regional press brings advertising within the reach of local groups and associations and places at their disposal a valuable means of communication, at reasonable cost.

In comparing the amount of public service advertising used by government departments in different countries, it becomes apparent that relatively little use is made of advertising by the South African government. This has probably more to do with the complexity of the socio-political make-up of the country and its state as a developing country. The dilemma facing the government, which must be well aware of the benefits that advertising can bring to social issues and public information, is that much of the information issuing from government sources tends, in the special circumstances applicable

to South Africa, to appear to be interpreted as propaganda. This is a troublesome factor which could negate, or at least dilute, much good communication of real social value.

A possible solution to this problem, which is not unique to South Africa, would be to encourage the formation of a non-profit, private sector organisation along the lines of the American Advertising Council to promote issues of national concern like health and social security, conservation of energy, crime prevention and the like.

The Advertising Council is supported entirely by the advertising-communications industries and American business, on behalf of the American people. Its advertising campaigns are geared to promoting voluntary citizen actions to help solve national problems. ✓

Approximately 400 requests from private organisations and government agencies are received annually by the Advertising Council requesting campaign support. These requests are analysed and reviewed by the Council's Director and senior executives, obtaining clarification and any additional information from the requesting organisation. The information is then forwarded to ✓ the Campaign Review Committee which makes recommendations

to the Board of Directors of the Advertising Council who vote on whether or not to accept the proposal for a campaign. ✓

A Public Policy Committee, an independent committee made up of leaders from many walks of life, recommends areas of concern and advises the Board of Directors about their importance to the public, acting as the Council's 'conscience' and reviewing ongoing campaigns and new proposals. ✓

The Council is also assisted by an Industries Advisory Committee, composed of leading business executives who advise on financial and other support areas.

A Media Committee working with outside consultants maintains liaison with all media to ensure maximum co-operation and campaign exposure.

When a campaign is accepted, a volunteer advertising agency is appointed by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA, South Africa's equivalent is the Association of Accredited Practitioners in Advertising, AAPA) to carry out the creative effort for all media to be used. The agency donates its skills free, charging only for out-of-pocket expenses.

At the same time, a volunteer co-ordinator - usually an advertising or marketing executive from a major advertiser - is appointed by the Association of National Advertisers (South Africa's equivalent body is the Society of Marketers) to co-ordinate all aspects of the approved campaign. ✓

The Advertising Council also appoints a campaign manager from its staff to facilitate the progress of the campaign and maintain liaison with client, agency and co-ordinator. Staff media managers prepare the public service advertisements for mass duplication and distribution to the major media which each year donate time and space worth over half a billion dollars¹² (see Appendix D, Recent Examples of Public Service Advertising Campaigns Conducted by the American Advertising Council : Press and Television). α

There is little doubt that public service advertising has a part to play in educating the public in major social issues and to some extent helping to solve problems. In South Africa this kind of advertising although established with both press and television is still in its infancy as a tool for social good. It is to be hoped that as the South African advertising industry grows and more media outlets become available, particularly television, private organisations ✓

and government agencies will utilise advertising to a far greater extent in its public service role.

It is necessary to strike a cautious note when considering the application of public service advertising to social issues in the South African context. Most research into advertising's effect on attitude change indicates the need for the message to be received in sufficient quantity, relative to all other messages on the topic. Even given the co-operation that currently exists in the South African advertising industry, the repetition of messages and the media combinations necessary would put a high price on the participants. J.D.H. Rayburn investigated the effects of televised public service announcements in a media campaign targeted towards the American middle-class, middle-aged female who either abused drugs, or was a potential drug abuser. The campaign was examined under the assumptions of the 'Linear Force Aggregation Theory', a deterministic theory postulating that an individual's attitudes are the mean of all discrepant information he or she received relevant to a particular topic¹³. Rayburn was able to show that the small amount of information contributed by the public service advertising campaign was unable to alter attitudes previously formed by the comparatively large amounts of prior information received from a variety of sources. This indicates

that unless impressive resources in terms of media repetition, funding and labour are forthcoming, at best all that could be achieved will be a certain degree of awareness of the problem. Attitudes will remain unchanged. ✓

6.3 REGULATION AND CONTROL OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING

The regulation of television advertising is strictly controlled in the interests of South African viewers. The SABC, with due regard for the growing amount of legislation designed to protect consumers, has evolved vetting and advisory procedures which set standards as high as any to be found in the world. The corporation remains alert and sensitive to public criticism of television advertisements and policy dictates that because of the heterogeneous nature of South Africa's television audiences and the fact that it is impossible to be selective with a truly 'mass' medium like television, it is better to err on the side of caution. To the outside observer this restraint might imply that television advertising in South Africa is dull, unimaginative and lacking in innovative creative flair. Nothing can be further from the truth. The South African advertising industry has achieved high standards in the production of television commercials,

a number of which have won prizes at international conventions. Furthermore, research shows that the South African public appears to quite like television advertisements and, in many cases, would be prepared to tolerate more, if it meant an improvement in programme services (see Chapter 8, South African Opinion and the Television Debate).

The SABC's comprehensive controls over advertising extend to the frequency, amount and nature of the advertisements. Sponsorship of programming by advertisers is not permitted and advertisements must be clearly distinguishable from programmes in which they are contained.

Television commercials are only permitted at the beginnings and ends of programmes, an exception being the broadcasting of lengthy sporting events, when natural breaks in the programme are utilised for advertising. These arrangements, designed to minimise viewer irritation, are, for obvious reasons, not popular with advertisers. But the SABC, being in the first instance a public service institution, insists that the public interest must be the dominating factor.

The British IBA, also an excellent model of advertising control in the public interest, takes a different view. Its policy is to permit advertising at the beginnings

and ends of programmes and also "in natural breaks therein"¹⁴.

The Authority argues that this arrangement allows an even spread of television advertising and does not militate against long programmes which might otherwise be followed by impracticably long periods of advertising¹⁵. It does not add that this arrangement is also most acceptable to advertisers. To be fair to the IBA, it is worth noting that of the 180 television programmes broadcast in a typical week, over half have no advertising in them¹⁶.

The SABC's approach to the control of television advertising and the maintenance of high standards obviously owes much to the fact that it was able to benefit from the experience of advertising control, both good and bad, in countries like Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada. The sensitive areas are much the same : politics, religion, 'good taste', appeals to fear, description and (exaggerated) claims for products and services, testimonials, guarantees, alcoholic drinks, advertising and children, advertising of medicines and treatments. These and many other sensitive areas are covered in great detail in codes of standards and practice.

The SABC has the additional burden of examining all advertising proposals that might, in some way, 'offend' against government policy of *apartheid* (separate development) for the different racial groups. Depending upon circumstances, commercials depicting mixing of the races, particularly in a social context attract intensive scrutiny. In practice, what tends to happen is that through experience, the advertising agencies have learned just how far their creative licence extends in this regard and there is seldom any major disagreement between advertisers and the SABC. The corporation claims that it closely monitors changes in the behaviour of South African society and adjusts its policy on advertisements featuring racial mixing, in line with what is acceptable.

There is also a close parallel between South Africa and Britain in the way the advertising industry exercises self-regulation in the form of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The same name applies in both countries and the *modus operandi* is virtually identical. Essentially, all sectors of the industry, i.e. advertisers, agencies and media, subscribe to a self-regulatory code dedicated to improving the image of advertising in society by making it more responsible and professional. The general public is encouraged, through advertising, to report to the ASA advertisements they consider to be

offensive, illegal, dishonest or indecent. Radio and television advertising complaints are not dealt with by the ASA but referred to the SABC (see Appendix C for examples of ASA advertising appeals).

In the United States the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the leading federal regulatory agency for advertising practices and is the subject of the greatest criticism from the advertising agency sector. Regulation takes many forms in the United States. In addition to the FTC, there are many other government agencies responsible for enforcing legislation concerning advertising such as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Securities and Exchange Commission and many more. The actions of the FTC have been criticised so much that Congress limited its jurisdiction in 1980. However, the growth of consumer advocacy groups in the last decade almost ensures continued pressure on advertisers¹⁷.

The most effective body for self-regulation has been the National Advertising Review Council which represents advertisers and agencies and investigates complaints received from consumers through its investigative body,

the National Advertising Division (NAD). Advertisers who refuse to comply with NAD recommendations are referred to the council's appeals body, the National Advertising Review Board (NARB), which may uphold, modify or reverse the NAD's findings. It may also direct the advertiser to modify or withdraw the advertisement in question¹⁸.

It can be seen that there are close parallels between South Africa's and Britain's ASA system of self-regulation and the United States' National Advertising Review Council, the chief difference being one of development, brought about by the burgeoning force of consumerism in both Britain and the United States.

6.4 ADVERTISING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The lack of comprehensive statistics from an official source on the amount of advertising in the South African economy hinders independent research into advertising's economic effects.

Market Research Africa (MRA) monitors above-the-line advertising media for its ADINDEX Report¹⁹. Using this source (which is generally recognised by the South African advertising industry as the most authoritative),

the amount of advertising in the economy is seen, in Table 6-3 (overleaf), to be in the region of R715 million.

The figures in the table ignore 'below-the-line' advertising expenditure, i.e. promotional material that does not bear media commission, but nevertheless appears on the advertising budget. This latter type of 'advertising' activity is the most difficult to estimate expenditure for, but it is generally accepted that it at least equals the amount spent on above-the-line, or commission bearing advertising.

It is interesting to see the impression commercial television has had on the distribution of above-the-line advertising since its arrival in 1978. Fig. 6-1 (page 6-29) shows this effect diagrammatically²⁰.

All other media have suffered, in relative terms, with the press worst hit of all. There can be little doubt that, were it not for the NPU's remonstrations to the government to restrict the amount of advertising in TV programming (currently set at eight percent), and the still relatively low numbers of broadcasting hours per channel, the press would suffer further losses in advertising share.

Should the SABC be allowed to develop its existing

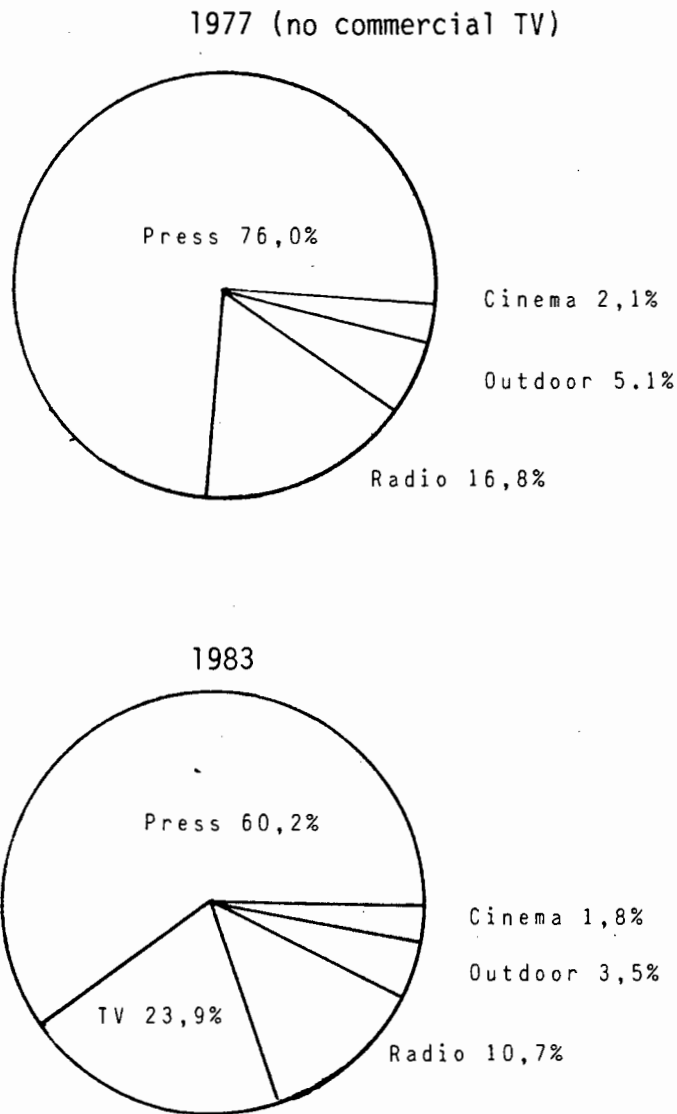
TABLE 6-3TOTAL SOUTH AFRICAN ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE, 1983

	<u>Rm</u>
Press	430,3
Radio	76,3
Cinema	12,5
Outdoor (<i>poster</i>)	25,1
Television	170,7*
	<u>714,9</u>

Source : MRA's ADINDEX, December 1983.

*The discrepancy of R29 million between MRA's estimate for television and the SABC's Annual Report 1983 figure of R141,6 million (previously mentioned) is due to the fact that the SABC pays a 16,5 percent commission to the advertising agencies on its gross advertising income of R170,7 million.

FIGURE 6-1
TRENDS IN SHARE OF TOTAL ADVERTISING
EXPENDITURE, 1977 - 1983



Source : Adapted from Management, September, 1982, p. 10.

monopoly services to their full potential, without the entry of an independent, press-related competitor it is difficult to see how the South African press could survive in its present form.

The entry of regional television would inevitably lead to a rationalisation of the South African newspaper industry. Only through diversification into television and perhaps some form of subsidy system (discussed later in this chapter) could the existing framework survive, but even then, the evolutionary process as it affects the communication industry will alter the type, range and role of newspapers in the future.

It can be seen then, that the lack of official statistics referring to advertising forms a barrier to economists and others concerned with studying this controversial and somewhat neglected economic activity.

Advertisers recognise the importance of advertising within their marketing mix but they find it extremely difficult to arrive at a scientific approach to defining how much to spend on advertising in given circumstances. A number of pragmatic, rule-of-thumb procedures have been developed, but overall, advertising appropriation decisions still remain one of the biggest problem areas of marketing.

In addition to the lack of reliable data on advertising expenditures and effects, a central problem is the difficulty of isolating the effects of advertising from a variety of other marketing activities affecting sales. Added to this, is the inevitable lag in the effect of advertising on sales. Most advertising models have suffered from avoiding these issues or simplifying them so much, that their practical utility has become negligible²¹ (see Appendix E for South Africa's twenty-five largest advertisers).

The amount of advertising in industrialised economies has traditionally been criticised in economic welfare terms, in that advertising's persuasive component is unacceptable, while recognition is given, in part, to the 'information' component in advertising such as that contained in most classified, financial, trade and technical advertisements.

Modern demand theory, which places greater emphasis on consumer behaviour, suggests that the conventional distinction between informative and persuasive advertising is misplaced. According to Professor Alderson²² :

"All effective communication is persuasive . . . both information and recommendations must be presented persuasively if they are to have any

effect on purchasing decisions"²³.

The most commonly voiced economic criticism against advertising comes from Professor Kaldor²⁴ who argues that because advertising is supplied jointly with goods and services, consumers are forced to pay for more advertising than they want, and are thereby unwilling accomplices in a waste of resources. The amount of advertising supplied exceeds that demanded and by this method advertisers are able to maximise their profits. This departure from marginal-cost pricing leads to an oversupply and a consequent waste of resources, which is financed by consumers who are forced to pay higher prices for advertised goods²⁵.

This type of reasoning by economists such as Kaldor and Steiner²⁶, clearly supports the contention according to Doyle, that consumer information requirements are not large enough to justify the level of advertising expenditure, therefore excessive advertising takes place and more may be spent than can be passed on to consumers because producers are out to maximise their profits. For evidence they suggest the predominance of advertising in non-competitive industries where firms employ advertising in an attempt to increase their share of a market, or to raise barriers to entry for new firms²⁷.

Telser²⁸, however, criticises Kaldor's reasoning. He questions the assumption that consumers have a limited choice between advertised and unadvertised goods. If unadvertised goods are cheaper, then the result of purchasing advertised goods may be an approximation to the marginal-cost pricing of advertising. Secondly he argues that there may be important savings in the joint supply of advertising with goods and services²⁹.

The most fundamental criticism of the Kaldor-type thesis must, however, rest on modern consumer demand theory.

Doyle argues that conventional economic theory, modelled on 'perfect competition', is inadequate in analysing advertising issues, as it is based on assumptions regarding given tastes, complete knowledge or simple technical information requirements, which permit straight comparison between a limited number of alternative choices. The most valuable contribution of behavioural science to modern demand theory, according to Doyle, has been "in showing the unreality of these assumptions"³⁰.

6.5 ADVERTISING AND MARKET CONCENTRATION

Another important economic question is does advertising lead to increased market concentration? Again the

issue is contentious with economists ranged on either side. There is reason to believe it might increase market concentration through the mechanism of scale economies and entry barriers. Economies of scale often exist because a certain saturation threshold must be reached for best results and because many media offer discounts to high volume advertisers. Also it takes time to build strong brand preference and this gives the heavy advertiser an advantage over the smaller firm. The cost advantages large firms enjoy make it more difficult for small enterprises to survive *ceteris paribus*.

If advertising is able to reduce unit cost of goods, through the benefit of scale economies, this is obviously to the consumers' advantage but, if this results in the smaller firms being eliminated it makes it possible for large firms to continue monopolistic restrictions. These restrictions are not, however, inherent in bigness.

In South Africa the small firm is denied the use of television because of the medium's high cost and the solely national nature of the service, making it the exclusive preserve of the major national and multinational companies.

The new entrant into an industry where advertising is

important may be forced either to charge a price much lower than established selling prices to compensate for its inferior image or, to advertise heavily in the hope of building an image quickly where the products are highly substitutable. In either event, sellers enjoying a well-developed brand reputation can maintain their prices persistently above costs without making entry attractive to newcomers. This in turn can spell the perpetuation of a particular oligopoly structure³¹.

To determine whether a relationship existed between intensity of advertising and market concentration, H.M. Mann et al.³² obtained data for a sample of forty-seven firms operating primarily in fourteen advertising-prone four-digit (*US nomenclature**) industries. They observed fairly substantial and statistically significant positive correlations, ranging from 0,41 to 0,72, between the ratio of advertising outlays to sales and four-digit concentration ratios³³.

In an earlier study of thirty-three British non-durable consumer goods, P.K.Else³⁴ found that the advertising/sales ratio was negatively correlated with the total sales volume of a product line, and positively correlated with

*Author's italics

the number of specific products within the line³⁵.

The former relationship suggests that smaller industries must advertise relatively more to achieve the most advantageous level of medium saturation. The latter suggests that variegated, complex product lines require the transmission of more messages to secure an equivalent consumer response. After taking these factors into account, Else found a slight, but not completely uniform tendency for the intensity of advertising to increase, with a crude index of market concentration³⁶.

The limited evidence appears to suggest that advertising expenditures may gravitate towards slightly higher levels in oligopolistic than in atomistically structured industries, but the relationship is weak and erratic. If a positive correlation does exist between concentration and advertising intensity, at least over some range, the direction of causality remains to be established³⁷.

6.6 ADVERTISING AND PROFITABILITY

The question of whether or not heavy advertising leads to unacceptably high profits- a prime manifestation of monopoly power - has proved to be impossible for economists to answer unequivocally. If entry into

advertising-prone industries is easy, the profits gained through image differentiation alone should be eroded away as newcomers are drawn by the profit lure, to play the same game.

High advertising may also contribute to the breakdown of an oligopolistic pricing discipline by increasing the dimensionality of sellers' rivalry. On the other hand, if firms, by advertising heavily can erect barriers to new entry, they may be able persistently to earn monopoly rents.

Scherer³⁸ suggests that successful product differentiation through advertising, is an important source of exceptionally high industrial profits. Quoting from the most prominently profitable firms on Fortune's list of the five hundred largest US industrial corporations, he attributes their success performances in large measure to massive advertising³⁹.

Comanor and Wilson⁴⁰ provide a more general perspective. In their major statistical study using multiple regression techniques, they analysed the effect of advertising expenditures on the average 1954 - 1957 after-tax return on stockholders' equity, in forty-one three-digit consumer goods industry groups, taking

into account also the influence of market concentration, scale economies in production, the absolute amount of capital required to enter the industry and the rate of growth of demand⁴¹.

They discovered a positive and statistically significant relationship between the ratio of advertising to sales and profit returns. Industries with high advertising outlays were found to command profits roughly fifty percent higher on average, than industries spending modest amounts on advertising. Profits were also correlated positively with concentration, however, when concentration ratios, a measure of scale economies and a measure of absolute capital requirements, were all included with the advertising/sales ratio as independent variables to explain profitability, the concentration variable proved to be statistically insignificant.

*(It is recognised that there could be auto-correlation here.)** This was so because concentration is positively correlated with the extent of scale economies and the magnitude of capital requirements⁴².

The Comanor and Wilson study supports the conclusion that intensive image differentiation through advertis-

*Author's italics

ing is an important source of monopoly profits, allowing its practitioners to hold prices above marginal costs without encouraging the competition of new entrants.

An important corollary in the South African context, given that television advertising time remains a scarce resource, oversubscribed, according to various estimates, by up to 250 percent, with no facility for regional coverage, is that the large companies with national markets will continue to dominate the medium as the high cost and high wastage (in terms of market coverage) will in itself form a barrier to market entry and will contribute to maintaining the status quo, with the small-to-medium sized firms constricted in terms of economic development.

6.7 ADVERTISING AND THE PRESS

Dependence on advertising for both the press and television entails distinct social costs. Doyle⁴³ argues that advertising makes the press extremely vulnerable to an economic recession, or to a change in the pattern of advertising. This is evident in the South African context by the large inroads being made by television into what was until comparatively recently the newspapers' share of total advertising. Fig. 6-1 (page 6-29) (previously discussed) illustrates this trend

from 1977 to 1983.

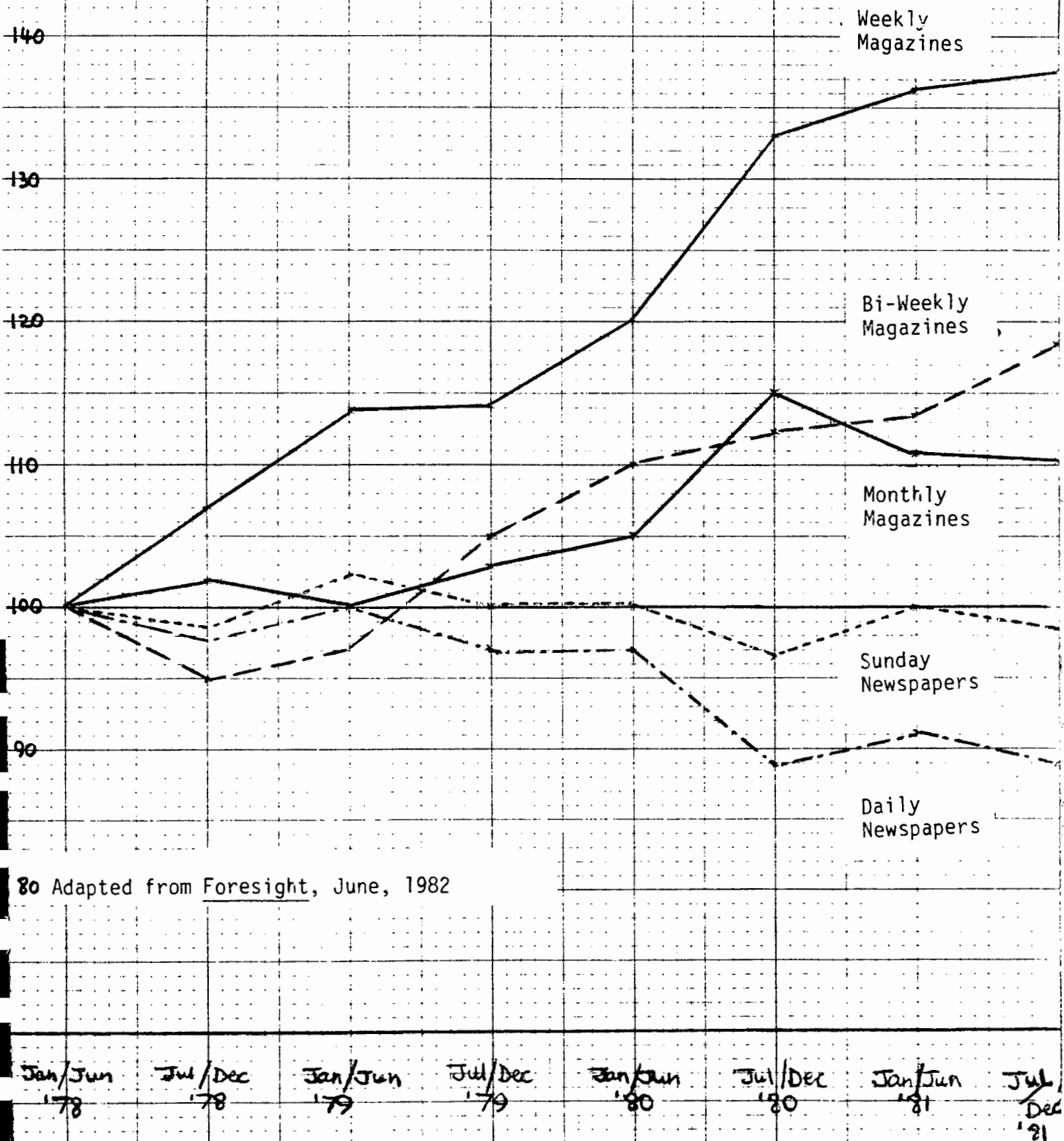
Mr Dawid de Villiers (*then**) managing director of Nasionale Pers in an address to the Economic Affairs Committee of the President's Council⁴⁴ reported that more than half of South Africa's daily newspapers are running at a loss and of the six Afrikaans dailies, only one showed a profit in the last financial year (1982).

It is interesting to note, however, that although newspaper circulations are steadily falling, magazines are comparatively bouyant as Figure 6-2 (overleaf) illustrates, using the January/June 1978 ABC circulation figures as the index base.

Mr de Villiers said that since its inception, SABC TV had made huge inroads into the profitability of all newspapers, but especially the dailies. In its first year, commercial television had taken just over sixteen percent of the total available advertising in the country. Last year (1982*) it had taken twenty-one percent and in 1983 it was expected to boost its share of available advertising to twenty-five percent of the total⁴⁵.

*Author's italics

FIGURE 6-2 CIRCULATION 1978 to 1981: MAGAZINES Vs NEWSPAPERS



The share of advertising in English-language newspapers had dropped from nearly twenty-five percent of the total in 1977 to seventeen percent last year (1982*).

Afrikaans newspapers had dropped from 8,3 percent of the total in 1977 to 5,8 percent last year (1982*).

Mr de Villiers emphasised the need to preserve the newspaper industry pointing out that in other Western countries governments had recognised the vital need for newspapers as both an essential part of the free democratic process and of the free enterprise system :

"In West Germany, the two commercial channels were allowed to broadcast a daily total of not more than twenty minutes of advertising. In Holland only fifteen minutes per day for each of the two channels was permitted.

In Britain and the United States, newspaper groups were free to invest in commercial television networks and could thus share in their profits."⁴⁶

Mr de Villiers outlined a seven point plan which he said would go a long way towards assisting South Africa's newspapers to survive in the era of commercial television :

*Author's italics

- (1) Increased television licenses, "which have been pegged for years", to enable the SABC to get more of its revenue from this source than from advertising.
- (2) Limit the amount of time the SABC can devote to advertising, along the lines applied to West Germany, Holland and France.
- (3) Give newspapers more say in the control of SABC tariffs so that there can be a better balance between the interests of the SABC and the newspapers.
- (4) Financing the SABC's additional capital needs with state money since "the SABC is a state monopoly and its capital needs should not be obtained at the expense of the private enterprise press".
- (5) The press should have the right to invest in new television developments such as cable television.
- (6) At least during the present recessionary period, the envisaged sales tax on advertising should be suspended.

- (7) The ban on importing newsprint should be revised to encourage price competition on the domestic newsprint market⁴⁷.

In practice, it seems unlikely that the government would encourage higher licence fees beyond the rate of inflation, as reverting to a revenue system where licence fee income was greater than advertising revenue would be interpreted as an unacceptable penalty to the taxpayer/viewer.

In limiting the amount of time the SABC can devote to advertising, the NPU already has considerable influence on the government. However, it seems inevitable that the government will permit the corporation even higher percentages of broadcasting time for advertising, in line with many other countries, depending upon public acceptance. The University of Cape Town study showed that, on the whole, the public would be prepared to tolerate considerably more advertising if this led to better programmes⁴⁸. (See Chapter 8, South African Opinion and the Television Debate.)

It is estimated that this tolerance might be breached should advertising increase beyond twelve to fourteen percent of broadcasting time.

of television and its adverse effect on other media, it is interesting to note the apparently healthy state of magazines, as is already apparent from Fig. 6-2 above.

6.8 THE QUESTION OF PRESS SUBSIDY

It has been a traditional argument that newspapers must retain their independence in an open market, depending solely on circulation and advertising revenue. Editorial policy regarding information (news) and entertainment has determined circulation and type of readership, which in turn has determined advertising revenue. Newspaper audiences are only large because the advertising 'subsidy' had disguised and reduced the true cost of newspapers by enabling the newspapers to balance increased circulation and advertising revenues against production costs and the price of the newspapers.

Through dependence upon advertising, newspapers have become extremely sensitive to economic conditions. The South African newspaper business is highly competitive and therefore cost sensitive.

The crisis in the newspaper industry has been caused, to some extent, by the loss of readers and by the

diversion of some advertising to television as Fig. 6-1 indicates. What is probably even more significant, however, is the changing pattern of South African newspaper readers : the move away from morning newspapers to afternoon papers and increased readership of the highly profitable weekend newspapers.

The impact of television, the services it provides, and the demands on viewers' time, are important factors in considering the changing pattern of newspaper readers. It can be argued, that there is now a current over-supply of both Afrikaans and English language newspapers (there are eleven dailies trading in the Johannesburg-Pretoria area alone) and it seems inevitable that some form of rationalisation is bound to occur, particularly in view of the public's growing demands for more and better television services. What seems to be happening is that the lifestyles of South Africans are being changed by television. This change will accelerate as television increases its media dominance.

The traditional response of many European countries to the threatened extinction of the press has been to initiate a system of government subsidies to sustain the newspapers in their traditional form and structure. Where this subsidy policy has been implemented it has usually been accompanied by much heart-searching lest

it defeats its own objective and creates avenues of governmental or official interference in the content of the newspapers.

In a detailed study of subsidies and the press in Europe, Anthony Smith⁴⁹ concludes that :

" . . . In no country, however, in which such subsidies have been introduced, has anyone complained that governments have interfered or tried to interfere more afterwards than before. In fact the countries with the most elaborate subsidy systems have often the strongest laws protecting journalism and the press against government interference . . . " ⁵⁰

However, in providing direct help to newspapers whose survival is threatened, a government could be deemed to be making a political statement about the kind of society and the political viewpoints it wants to preserve. In trying to escape this charge of 'bias', European countries have looked instead for automatic forms of subsidy payment. Newspapers are therefore given subsidies on the tonnage of newsprint consumed, or on postal and telephone charges, or relief on taxation, etc. Table 6-4 (overleaf) is a chart summarising these various forms of indirect subsidy.

TABLE 6-4

CHART SUMMARISING FORMS OF SUBSIDY BY COUNTRY

Type of Subsidy	FRANCE	GERMANY	ITALY	SWEDEN	NORWAY	DENMARK	FINLAND	HOLLAND	BELGIUM	SWITZERLAND	AUSTRIA	IRELAND	BRITAIN
VAT concessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
other tax concessions	✓			✓					✓				
direct grants	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		
low-interest loans		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					
postal concessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
telephone and telegraph concessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
rail concessions	✓		✓					✓	✓				
transport subsidies			✓				✓				✓		
government advertising			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓				
training and research grants				✓	✓		✓					✓	
newsagency subsidies	✓		✓	✓	✓								
subsidies to political party organisations				✓	✓		✓						
subsidies for joint distribution				✓	✓								
subsidies for joint production				✓									

Source SMITH, A. Subsidies and the Press in Europe, 1977, p. 110

Smith points out that these indirect subsidies help the fortunate more than the unfortunate. The bigger the pagination, or the greater the circulation, the more the newsprint consumed, the more is saved from tax relief and from subsidies on the cost of news collection :

" . . . in other words it has been found necessary to protect newspapers which are losing the battle for life in the marketplace, to provide aid in such a way as to arrest the forces of the market, not to spread a general largesse which tends to accelerate the market forces . . . the more the authorities try to reach down to aid the least successful the more complex and interventionist the approach has to be . . . " ⁵¹

Newspapers are essentially low-margin, labour intensive products; they require concentrated populations to minimise distribution costs. News is difficult and expensive to collect. They are vulnerable to the economy's effect upon advertising. Nearly all industrialised countries have set themselves unrealistic expectations from newspapers that their economies can no longer sustain. In South Africa, as elsewhere, the threat that the death or severe rationalisation of the press will lead to the destruction of political freedom is widely felt.

Smith, considering the European situation regarding press subsidies, asks whether these are not merely supporting an institution whose day is done.

"Are we subsidising horses in an effort to make them compete with steam engines? Are we trying to preserve an army of blacksmiths when we need a small group of trained engineers? . . . Is it democracy which disappears with small newspapers, or one particular form? While subsidies are appearing at one end of the scene, cable television, local radio, community papers are appearing at the other - perhaps these, rather than what we call 'the press', are the heirs of the printers' sheets which sustained the politics of the last hundred years?"⁵²

In theory, the subsidies applied to the European press could be adapted to the South African situation. It is debatable, however, that such measures would be well received by the South African public.

The University of Cape Town survey of public opinion found little support for press subsidies (see Chapter 8, South African Opinion and the Television Debate).

It is equally contentious to assume that the newspaper industry itself would be united in welcoming a system

of subsidies, given its highly politicised and partisan history and make-up.

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